



The Plenary

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A newsletter of the SADC Parliamentary Forum focusing on the Plenary Assembly Session

Renewed focus on Agriculture, the Youth & Role of Parliaments



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Honourable Roger Mancienne

From the President of SADC PF

Welcome to yet another edition of The Plenary newsletter. In July 2023, we gathered in Arusha, in the United Republic of Tanzania, for the 53rd Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC Parliamentary Forum.

I take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to our gracious host, the Right Honourable Dr. Tulia Ackson, the Speaker of the Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania and her dedicated team for meticulously hosting this Plenary and making us all feel home away from home. I believe I speak for many when I say that we had a truly productive and memorable Plenary in Arusha.

We owe a great debt of gratitude, also, to the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Her Excellency Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, for taking time off her busy schedule to officially open our Plenary, which took place under the timely theme: “Modernising Agriculture to Address Food Insecurity and Youth Unemployment in the SADC Region: The Role of Parliaments.”

Over the four days of this Plenary we engaged in elaborate discussions on various current and emerging issues affecting our region. Among those issues were the state and prospects within the agriculture sector, gender equity and equality and regional integration.

We are thankful to the United Republic of Tanzania for sharing insights on how she has managed to facilitate access to land, financial and technological support, market opportunities and capacity enhancement for young people.

Also during this Plenary, we received country reports detailing progress made in implementing the resolutions of the 52nd Plenary of the SADC Plenary Assembly Session.

This edition of the Plenary newsletter captures some of the most important proceedings and debates during the 53rd Plenary. I congratulate all those who worked hard to compile it.

Enjoy the reading!



The Plenary

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SADC PF SG: SADC Parliament on the horizon



The Secretary General of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, Ms Boemo Sekgoma (right) speaks at the 53rd Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC PF in Arusha, while (from left) the Speaker of the United Republic of Tanzania, Dr Tulia Ackson, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Dr Samia Suluhu Hassan and the President of SADC PF Honourable Roger Mancienna listen in. Photo: Moses Magadza

Arusha, Tanzania – The Secretary General of the SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF), Ms Boemo Sekgoma has said that it is no longer a question of if, but when the SADC PF will be transformed into a SADC Regional Parliament in line with its founding objectives.

Speaking at the beginning of the 53rd Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC PF in Arusha, Tanzania, Sekgoma said the Forum, which brings together 15 national parliaments of SADC, had obtained policy approval from the SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government to transform into a SADC Regional Parliament.

“As we meet, this long-awaited transformation is now within arm’s reach, and national Parliaments are encouraged to support the final steps to actualise it through the signature of the Agreement Amending the SADC Treaty, and eventually by consideration of the Protocol. We are thus drawing closer to our coveted regional objective to have a SADC Parliament which will promote further inter-parliamentary integration,” Sekgoma said to applause.

The 53rd Plenary Assembly Session of the Forum got underway on 3 July, 2023 under the theme: “Modernizing Agriculture to Address Food Insecurity and Youth Unemployment in the SADC Region: Role of the Parliaments.”

The SG said the plenary, which runs from July 2 to July 8, 2023 aims to strengthen legislative governance in Southern Africa.

“We have all gathered here to contribute towards strengthening legislative governance in Southern Africa. This is a subject which is so dear to my

heart, and I believe it is also dear to the hearts of many citizens of SADC,” she told delegates, who included the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Her Excellency Dr Samia Suluhu Hassan.

Noting that this was the fourth time that the Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania was hosting the Plenary Assembly, which is the highest decision-making body of the SADC PF, Sekgoma outlined the achievements made under the regional consultative body’s execution of its Strategic Plan (2019-2023).

“Many success stories were registered and significant lessons learned. These will undoubtedly inform the successor strategic plan as we also seek to expand the role of parliamentarians in building the future of our Regional Economic Community,” she said.

She said for the first time in the history of the Forum, a process of domesticating three Model Laws began during the course of one Strategic Plan.

“Initiatives to domesticate the SADC Model Law on Elections, which was adopted in December 2018, began in January 2019, while domestication of the SADC Model Law on Gender-Based Violence which was adopted in 2021 and the Model Law on Public Financial Management (PFM) which was also adopted in 2022 is already under consideration,” she said.

She added: “The Forum has adopted, also, Principles and Guidelines for national Parliaments to address the implementation of human rights and to curb corruption. These documents

support the existing Bill of rights of the SADC-PF. Furthermore, tremendous progress has been made by improving the robustness of the Forum’s institutional framework.”

The SG said SADC PF was busy promoting parliamentary democracy at the regional level “through implementing programmes and pursuing initiatives which build the capacity of Member Parliaments to uphold democratic principles, preserve the rule of law, and promote the sovereignty and independence of parliaments”.

She said the SADC PF was providing a platform for the region’s lawmakers “to share lessons and develop peer experiences which enhance democracy in our region as a whole”.

She said: “Our aim is to make the SADC region an epitome of democracy in the world, for others to emulate.”

The Secretary General thanked the Plenary Assembly for its leadership and guidance towards parliamentary excellence and said the diverse representation at the 53rd plenary was a testament to the relevance and effectiveness of the SADC Parliamentary Forum.

The 53rd Plenary Assembly Session drew the participation of twelve out of the Forum’s fifteen member parliaments.

The National Assembly of Angola was represented by a delegation of five Members led by Honourable Pedro Sebastião, MP. The Parliament of Botswana has a delegation of five Members led by Honourable Pono Moatlhodi, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly.

The Parliament of the Democratic Republic of Congo sent six Members led by Honourable Sanguma T. Mossai, Vice President of Senate, while the Parliament of the Kingdom of Eswatini had a delegation of six Members, led by Honourable Petros Mavimbela, Speaker of the House of Assembly.

The Parliament of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was represented by a delegation of six Members led by Honourable Tlohang Sekhamane, newly-elected Speaker of the National Assembly.

From the Parliament of Malawi, Honourable Aisha Mambo Adams, the Second Deputy Speaker of Parliament, led a delegation of eight

Members while the Parliament of Namibia sent seven Members led by Hon. Phillipus Wido Katamelo, MP.

From the National Assembly of Seychelles, Honourable. Roger Mancienne, Speaker of the National Assembly and President of the SADC Parliamentary Forum is heading a delegation of three Members.

Southern Africa's biggest economy, South Africa, was represented at the Plenary Assembly by five Members led by Honourable Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakulu, Speaker of the National Assembly.

The Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania, which hosted the 53rd Plenary Assembly had a

delegation of six Members led by Honourable Dr Tulia Ackson, Speaker of Parliament.

The National Assembly of Zambia dispatched a delegation of six Members led by Honourable Nelly Mutti, Speaker of the National Assembly while the Parliament of the Republic of Zimbabwe had a delegation of six Members led by Honourable Advocate Jacob Francis Nzwidamilimo Mudenda, Speaker of the National Assembly.

Sekgoma expressed gratitude to the Government and the Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania through Honourable Speaker Ackson, for hosting the SADC Parliamentary Forum 53rd Plenary Assembly Session at short notice.

SADC PF wants barriers against women in agriculture to fall



The President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Her Excellency Samia Suluhu Hassan (second from left) takes notes while the Chairperson of the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC) of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, Honourable Regina Esparon of Seychelles (right), addresses the 53rd Plenary Assembly Session of SADC PF in Tanzania on 3 July, 2023. Photo: Moses Magadza

ARUSHA, TANZANIA - The Chairperson of the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC) of the SADC Parliamentary Forum has called for urgent intensified efforts and transformative action in the SADC region to remove barriers thwarting women's empowerment and hindering the achievement of gender parity.

Honourable Regina Esparon of the Parliament of Seychelles made the call at the official opening of the SADC PF's 53rd Plenary Assembly Session that began in Arusha, Tanzania on 3 July, 2023.

She told delegates from 12 SADC Member States who included the guest of honour, Her Excellency Dr Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United

Republic of Tanzania, that the Plenary Assembly presented a crucial opportunity to introspect on strides made in promoting gender equality, empowering women, and championing women's rights within nations across the region and on a global scale.

She contended that said despite global efforts, women continued to face discrimination and remained significantly underrepresented in politics and decision-making roles.

She said recent data on Sustainable Development Goal 5 showed the world was still off track to achieve gender equality by 2030.

The Global Gender Gap Report 2023, released

by the World Economic Forum, showed that the gender gap closed to date was only 68.2% for Sub-Saharan Africa, compared to 76.3% for Europe.

"Furthermore for political participation, the gender gap has only been closed by 22.6% demonstrating that there is momentous effort to be made to empower women for political careers," she said.

Esparon cited the UN Women's Gender Snapshot for 2022, which assesses progress in gender equality across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and noted that at the current pace, it would take 286 years to eradicate discriminatory laws and close the gaps in the legal protections for

women and girls.

“However, some SADC Member States have made commendable strides in implementing legislative and other measures to reduce gender inequality,” she conceded.

She, however, said a 2022 study on Challenges for Women Political Participation in SADC Countries by the SADC-PF revealed a perturbing reality, indicating that the barriers identified over the past decade, which hindered women’s progress towards top positions in politics and decision-making at all levels, persist.

“Emerging challenges such as cyber violence against women and girls, gender injustices resulting from climate change, and prolonged conflicts resulting into phenomena such as mass migration and internal displacements perpetuate gender gaps,” she said, adding that the situation was bound to worsen unless these novel challenges were addressed.

She said the RWPC welcomed the SADC Model Law on Gender-Based Violence which provided a broad definition to GBV, such that it could encapsulate all forms of violence against women, including cyber violence.

“As parliamentarians, we have a unique opportunity to accelerate gender equality and empower women in the SADC region, by advocating the adoption of relevant model laws, which have been adopted by the SADC-PF to protect the rights of women and girls,” she said.

These model laws included the SADC Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage, as well as the SADC Model Law on Gender-Based Violence.

Esparon said in Africa, women continued being underrepresented in key decision-making roles with the African Gender Barometer 2021 revealing that women held only 22% of cabinet positions, 12% of top party functionary positions, and a mere 7% of high-level political executive positions, including presidents, vice presidents, prime ministers, and deputy prime ministers.

She said the upcoming wave of presidential and parliamentary elections over the next two years offered the SADC region a chance to translate promises into action.

“There is need for women to be equally represented as candidates for election as MPs, as Cabinet ministers, and even as stakeholders coordinating or observing the election process. Let us ensure that gender equality is not just rhetoric but a tangible reality in our respective countries and the entire SADC region,” she urged.

She congratulated the United Republic of Tanzania for setting a remarkable example by

electing Hassan as the country’s President.

“Her esteemed leadership serves as an inspiration and testimony to the progress we can achieve when women are given the opportunity to excel in the highest positions of power,” she said.

Turning to the theme of the assembly, “Modernizing Agriculture for Food Security and Youth Employment in SADC: Role of Parliaments,” she said it holds great significance for women in the region.

“Food insecurity remains a critical challenge affecting women and children in particular, due to factors such as climate change-induced droughts and floods.

According to a Food and Agricultural Organisation report on “The Status of Women in Agrifood systems” in 2023, 66% of women in Sub-Saharan Africa were employed in Agri-food systems.

“By prioritising agricultural modernisation, we can address the unique barriers faced by women in the agricultural sector. This will empower women, not in? ensuring food security alone, but also nutritional sufficiency, and economic benefits, in the SADC region,” the MP said.

Agriculture is the foundation of most economies, supporting the livelihoods of the majority of the region’s population and women’s vital role in the agricultural sector, especially in rural areas, cannot be overstated, she emphasised.

“They are the primary agro-food producers, responsible for household food security and nutrition, and also represent a significant portion of the workforce in commercial agriculture.”

She said despite women’s vital role in agriculture, they often experience gender-based discrimination which hinders their productivity, economic empowerment and opportunities.

These barriers, including limited access to credit, resources, and limited land rights, hinder women while factors such as customary land tenure systems, cultural norms, discriminatory practices, and legal frameworks contribute to unequal land access and control for women compared to men, Hon Esparon noted.

“As parliamentarians, it is our duty to dismantle these barriers and establish an enabling environment that empowers women in agriculture in our region,” she declared and called for the adoption of gender-responsive agricultural policies to address the unique challenges faced by women in SADC agriculture, particularly smallholder farmers.

She said empowering women in agriculture has significant potential to improve food

security, reduce poverty, and drive sustainable development.

“We must prioritise policy development and implementation that specifically addresses gender disparities, while providing targeted financial and technical support to women farmers.”

Hon Esparon said investment in gender-sensitive agricultural services, training programmes, and initiatives promoting women’s land rights, technology adoption, and access to resources, was crucial.

Additionally, concerted efforts were needed to eliminate gender-based violence and discrimination, enabling women’s full participation in and benefit from agriculture.

She further said modernising agriculture requires investment in innovative technologies, research and development.

“As we embrace the digital era, it is crucial to ensure that women are not left behind. We need to bridge the digital gender divide, by promoting digital literacy and providing access to information and communication technologies that can enhance productivity and market opportunities for women farmers,” the legislator told the gathering.

She advocated for women to be lifted and included in agricultural education up to tertiary level.

“The female youth must be drawn towards agricultural education so that our best minds remain in Africa to work in the modernisation and sophistication of agriculture, so that we can produce more efficiently, in a greener way, and with less labour intensiveness.”

She added: “Climate change poses significant threats to food security and livelihoods and women often find themselves at the forefront of climate change impacts, yet they possess invaluable traditional knowledge and skills that can contribute to climate-resilient agriculture. We must be deliberate in supporting women’s participation in climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, providing them with the necessary tools and resources.”

She said parliamentarians have crucial roles to play in advocating for policy reforms, mobilising resources, and fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships that prioritise women’s needs and aspirations in agriculture.

“I reiterate that gender equality is not a women’s issue, but a human rights issue. This calls for us all to come together as women and men of SADC region, to foster harmonious collaboration in building a society where women and girls are empowered, their rights are safeguarded, and their voices reverberate with influence,” Esparon said.



Tanzania reiterates commitment to SADC PF



*The Speaker of the United Republic of Tanzania, Dr Tulia Ackson.
Photo: Deonisius Simba, Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania.*

ARUSAHA, TANZANIA – The Speaker of the United Republic of Tanzania, Dr Tulia Ackson has said that her country, through its parliament, is committed to the work of the SADC Parliamentary Forum and will continue to be an active Member of the Forum.

“The National Assembly of Tanzania is a committed Member of SADC-PF since its inception in September 1997 in Blantyre, Malawi. Over the years, our Parliament has been honouring its obligations including hosting the (Plenary) Assemblies of the Forum,” the Speaker said.

She was speaking at the beginning of the 53rd Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC PF. She recalled that the Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania last hosted the Plenary Assembly Session of SADC PF in 2013 in Arusha.

She added: “I wish to renew our commitment to the principles, objectives and values for which this Forum was created: respect for human rights, good governance, gender equality, democracy and above all, sustainable development.”

She reiterated the United Republic of Tanzania’s “unwavering support to ensure this Forum becomes a fully-fledged Regional Parliament as envisaged by its founders”.

She justified the selection of Arusha as the venue

for the 53rd Plenary Assembly Session.

“The hosting of an Assembly like this in Arusha enables delegates to kill two birds, if not three with one stone. In the first place, Arusha enjoys excellent weather almost throughout the year, creating an ideal environment for delegates to participate effectively in meetings. More importantly, this town is located mid-way along the great north road from Cape Town, South Africa to Cairo, Egypt,” she said.

She added: “Arusha is primarily a gateway to our northern tourist circuit. From here, one can easily reach the magnificent Ngorongoro Crater, Manyara National Park, Tarangire National Park, Serengeti National Park as well as to the highest roof in Africa, the Kilimanjaro Mountain, to mention but a few.”

Speaking at the same occasion, the President of the SADC PF who is also the Speaker of the National Assembly of Seychelles, Honourable Roger Mancienne, said the theme of the plenary was appropriate and timely. He noted that the theme reflected the needs of the region with respect to agriculture, food insecurity and youth unemployment.

“The recent years have been years of high inflation and since several food products in Africa are imported, the cost of living has escalated for most households, whilst revenue of citizens has

remained the same,” Mancienne said.

He reasoned that high inflation had created imbalances in food availability, “especially in remote locations where the cost of transportation is high, and where merchants no longer find it viable to freight products and food items”.

He called for optimum use of the abundant fertile soil and natural resources in Southern Africa.

“Africa itself is the continent with the highest percentage of unused arable land in the world, thus indicating its innate potential to generate agricultural products and food items,” he said.

The SADC President said he believed that SADC member states had the ability to produce their own food and to be food-independent.

“We believe we can subsist to our own needs without relying heavily and dangerously on importations, the costs of which are hefty and unpredictable,” he said.

He called on the region’s lawmakers to invest in young people, so that they could play meaningful roles in the agriculture sector. He said this was important so that young people “do not naturally turn away to more trendy or fashionable jobs or just to live in the cities and towns rather than in the countryside”.

He challenged the MPs to make living in the countryside and working in agriculture more attractive and profitable.

“We need to be able to demonstrate the gains that can be made with new methods in agriculture, with mechanization and modernisation but also in the provision of facilities and services to rural areas. I think we have seen too much of the resource drain from the rural sector to urban centres. The question is, can we reverse the trend,” he pondered.

He added: “We also believe that the rising youth have the potential to become professionals who interface with modernised agriculture and are

able to generate wealth for their families and the state.”

He said modern agriculture could be a solution to youth unemployment and a way towards increased food security so that famine ends in SADC countries.

“No individual should be losing his or her life to lack of food or malnutrition, especially when the soil is so rich and resources are abundant,” he opined.

He expressed optimism that the symposium preceding the Plenary would inspire MPs to explore ways in which parliaments could abolish

famine and make agriculture thrive in the SADC region, “notwithstanding natural disasters which are becoming more and more devastating and gruesome”.

He added: “It is the role of Parliaments to make the region resilient through laws, policies and oversight mechanisms which can protect citizens against the vicissitudes of environmental disasters and their effect on agriculture.”

He called for concerted efforts to address the cross-cutting themes of agriculture, energy security, food security, youth unemployment and resilience to climate disasters.

Expanding agriculture through the youth: The Tanzanian experience



The President of Tanzania, Her Excellency Samia Suluhu Hassan, speaks at the start of the SADC Parliamentary Forum's 53rd Plenary Assembly Session in Arusha, Tanzania on 3 July, 2023. Photo: Deonisius Simba.

ARUSHA, TANZANIA - THE government of the Republic of Tanzania is extensively investing in promoting agri-businesses to entice more youths into agriculture under a flagship programme that aims to grow the sector.

The President of Tanzania, Her Excellency Samia Suluhu Hassan, said this when she officially

opened the SADC Parliamentary Forum's 53rd Plenary Assembly Session that got underway in Arusha, Tanzania on 3 July, 2023.

Twelve of the fifteen SADC national parliaments that are Members of the SADC PF attended the Plenary Assembly, which ended on 8 July 2023 and was held under the theme: “Modernizing

Agriculture for Food Security and Youth Employment in SADC: Role of Parliaments.”

Hassan, the first female President of the Republic of Tanzania, told the Plenary Assembly that her country's initiative, called Building a Better Tomorrow (BBT), was intended to optimize the use of the untapped potential of the agricultural

value chain.

She said that currently, agriculture is the main source of employment and income for about 65% of the population of the SADC region.

“The tourism sector, of which our government should afford appropriate attention in order to realize the SADC Vision 2050, the AU (African Union) Agenda 2063 and the UN (United Nations) 2030 Agenda, also has potential,” she said.

She highlighted that SADC was among the regions with the youngest populations in the world, hence the need for the region to create up to 12 million jobs every year over the next twenty years to absorb new entrants to the labour market.

The President said recent statistics had shown that the youth in Tanzania aged 18-35 years, constituted 60% of the total population.

“It is, therefore, imperative that we invest in our youth and to this end we have devised a number of strategies to attract the youth into the agriculture sector. For us, agriculture comprises crop farming, aqua farming, fisheries, livestock keeping and also honey production,” she said.

She said her government was investing in promoting agri-businesses for youths under its BBT programme.

“It is a flagship programme to attract the youth to indulge and invest in working in agriculture. As a government we are facilitating access to land as the youths will be given their own land. We are facilitating financial support, technology, market opportunity and capacity enhancement,” she said.

The President said when these opportunities were announced, there was an overwhelming response from the youth, but only 812 youths who are now undergoing training were recruited.

“When they finish this training they will be enrolled in 13 incubation centres for hands-on skills and go into agri-business under block systems,” she said and added that after including the youths, the sector was expected to grow by 10% from the present 3,6% and create 1,5 million job opportunities in eight years from 2022 to 2030.

She revealed that her country had increased the budget of the agricultural sector four-fold and she urged delegates to visit one of the BBT youth incubation centres in Arusha.

Hassan said increased financial allocation to the agricultural sector over the years had put special emphasis on irrigation schemes and extension services.

This was in conformity with the 2004 Dar es Salaam Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in the SADC region which urged

governments to allocate at least 10% of their national budgets to agriculture as recommended by the African Union.

She said her government had established, also, an Agricultural Advisory Council to advise the presidency on agricultural best practices and the most effective approaches to expedite agricultural transformation in the country.

The President explained that the council included personalities with requisite skills and experience in agriculture and other sectors relevant to agricultural development and as such it was expected to contribute significantly towards the agricultural sector development in Tanzania.

She highlighted that the SADC region, with a total population of about 380 million people, had about 51.3 million food insecure people as shown by 2020-2021 estimates, representing an increase of 25.7% from those of 2019-2020.



The tourism sector, of which our government should afford appropriate attention in order to realize the SADC Vision 2050, the AU (African Union) Agenda 2063 and the UN (United Nations) 2030 Agenda, also has potential.

- Her Excellency Samia Suluhu Hassan

“Just in one year, there has been an increase of food insecure people by 25.7% in the SADC region. This is unacceptable,” she said, adding that the situation has been worsened by global conflicts and climate change that negatively impact the agricultural sector in the majority of SADC countries.

Hassan said it was ironic that there were so many food-insecure people in SADC “yet we have a total of 9.85 million square kilometres of land which could make the region a food basket for Africa and beyond if effectively and properly leveraged”.

She contended that with vast land for agriculture, the region must do whatever it has to do to increase food production and end hunger. She suggested coping mechanisms to make food available and accessible to everyone in the region.

Such interventions, she reckoned, might include a total commitment to the implementation of various policies and strategies adopted from time to time, such as the 2014 SADC Regional Agriculture Policy, food production through input support programmes, intra-SADC trade, the Africa Continental Free Trade Area protocol, the blue economy and agriculture, to build resilience.

She challenged the region’s lawmakers to walk the talk on strengthening the agriculture sector.

“We are good at coming up with so many policies and policy programmes but we do not implement them. It is time we started to implement our own policies for food production,” she said.

She suggested: “We must commit to the implementation of Agenda 2063, particularly Goal Number 5 on modern agriculture to increase productivity and production as well as Sustainable Development Goals Goal 2 that intends curtailing hunger by 2030.”

Hassan stressed that national parliaments had a critical role to play in the oversight, enactment of much needed laws and policies as well as ratification of regional and global protocols that encourage agricultural development and also speaking for the people they represented in parliament.

“MPs have a vital role to play in agricultural transformation,” she said.

She informed the Plenary Assembly that Tanzania would be hosting the 2024 Africa Food Systems Forum under the theme “Recover, Regenerate, Act” as a strategy for food systems transformation in the first week of September 2023 in Dar es Salaam.

“We hope it will be another platform for us to come up with practical contextualization of the agricultural and food security issues,” she stated.

On gender equity and gender equality, the President urged all women parliamentarians and professional groups to continue joining efforts and raising voices to call for justice to be done.

“This is a long-worn thought and changes are being seen because we presented ourselves on the battle field in 1995 (Beijing Women’s Conference) and much has changed without which Samia Suluhu Hassan would not be standing here today as the President of Tanzania,” she said to applause.

She said Tanzania would support domestication of SADC model laws and commended Honourable Dr Tulia Ackson, the Speaker of the National Assembly of Tanzania for hosting the 53rd Plenary Assembly. She also congratulated SADC PF Secretary General Ms. Boemo Sekgoma for implementing the Forum’s Strategic Plan (2019-2023).



Call to make agriculture attractive for young people



The United Republic of Tanzania's Minister of Agriculture, Honourable Hussein Bashe (right), stresses a point while addressing a symposium preceding the 53rd Plenary Assembly Session in Arusha, Tanzania on 3 July 2023 while (from left) the Speaker of the Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania, Dr. Tulia Ackson; the President of SADC PF Honourable Roger Mancienné; and SADC PF Secretary General, Ms. Boemo Sekgoma listen in. Photo: Moses Magadza

ARUSHA, TANZANIA - The 53rd Plenary Assembly Session of the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) began yesterday in Arusha, Tanzania, with calls for SADC member states to invest in agriculture and to make the sector attractive for the SADC region's largely youthful population.

Twelve out of the fifteen member national parliaments of the SADC PF attended the Plenary Assembly, which was held from 2 to 8 July 2023 under the theme: "Modernizing Agriculture to Address Food Insecurity and Youth Unemployment in the SADC Region: Role of the Parliaments".

The United Republic of Tanzania's Minister of Agriculture, Honourable Hussein Bashe got proceedings underway with a thought-provoking presentation during a symposium immediately preceding the Plenary Assembly on 3 July, 2023.

Calling on SADC lawmakers to make agriculture attractive to young people, Bashe argued that strengthening youth and women involvement in agriculture under the Building a Better Tomorrow (BBT) agribusiness initiative would create employment for about 3 million youth in the United Republic of Tanzania alone by 2025.

The BBT Programme focused on solving challenges faced by the youth, including access to land, technology, capital, skills and market.

"As we strive to make agriculture sexy and attractive to the youth, labour saving technologies (mechanization and digitalization) are imperative," the Minister said.

He said while Africa had around 1.12 billion hectares of agricultural land used for the cultivation of crops and the production of animals, the continent had 65% of world's remaining uncultivated arable land and had the potential to produce enough food to feed itself and contribute to feeding 9.7 billion by 2050.

"Ironically more than 283 million Africans go to bed hungry every day. We have no choice, as time is not on our side. The population of Africa will rise to two billion by 2050, and they must be fed. We must take decisive actions now to secure their food supplies," he said.

Bashe said the United Republic of Tanzania had made great strides in enhancing agriculture productivity but there was room for improvement.

He said the United Republic of Tanzania had a total of 12 million households and approximately 7.8 million households (65%) were farmers.

He added that most government efforts focused on enticing the growing youth population which represented the energetic labour force in the sector, which registered growth of 3.9% in 2021.

According to the Minister, the government used several strategies to address the challenge of low sector performance.

He said the agriculture budget was increased from 294.16 billion shillings in 2021/22 to 970.7 billion shillings in 2023/24 while the government also invested in research in 2021/22 through seed development and multiplication.

"The government provided farmers with access

to modern technology and equipment to help improve agricultural productivity and efficiency. This included irrigation systems, mechanical tools such as tractors and harvesters and so on, making the sector enticing to more youths to take up farming," he said.

Other initiatives implemented were investing in infrastructure such as roads, storage facilities, and processing plants, improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the agricultural sector, he added.

The Minister also noted that the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania had launched the "Kilimo Bashara" Agenda 10/30, aimed at transforming agriculture into a business.

Agenda 10/30 sought to ensure that the agriculture sector (crop sub-sector) dominated by small-scale farmers, grew by 10% by 2030.

"To achieve this target, several catalytic interventions have been devised including rallying public and private sectors to invest in agriculture and increasing budgetary allocations," said Bashe.

Other strategies to grow the agriculture sector in the United Republic of Tanzania included undertaking legal, policy and institutional reforms to increase performance and efficiency in the segment.

The Minister said to engage innovative youthful minds, the Tanzanian Government was promoting and investing in value-added products: encouraging the development of value-added agricultural products, such as processed foods and beverages in order to increase the value of crops and improve the overall competitiveness of the

sector.

There was also support offered to small-scale farmers through initiatives like microloans and market access programs; promotion and institutionalization of block farming models from 110 to 10,000 block farms by 2030, he said.

Bashe said the implementation of the horticulture development strategy to attain export value of US\$2 billion would help to expand the export markets from the current US\$1.2 billion to US\$5 billion by 2030 and would also be useful in enticing jobless youths into taking up farming as an occupation.

The Minister highlighted the opportunities for agriculture modernisation in the United Republic of Tanzania in particular and in Africa in general in the quest to reduce dependence on the West for food. These included vast underutilized arable land with increasing populations that demanded food commercially.

He highlighted that the intra- and inter-Africa trade agreements such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) provided an expanded market for produce while also making raw materials for agro industries, such as minerals for fertilizers, food for human and animal feed, more accessible.

“There is capacity for Africa to restructure global financing in agriculture given the available potential for technology to be a key driver of productivity growth,” he said.

The Minister pointed out that land reform and land administration programmes would continue to be

among the many agendas in the transformational journey – the need for appropriate policies and laws.

According to Bashe, by improving food systems and agribusinesses, countries would promote agricultural trade in the East Africa Community, SADC, the African Union (AU) and globally, although emerging challenges such as those arising from the impact of climate change, including drought, floods and salinization, must be addressed appropriately.

He told the lawmakers that the future of the world was agribusiness with a need to feed the 2.4 billion population now and 9.7 billion by 2050.

“With Africa’s urban food markets set to attain a total value of more than US\$400 billion and the food system business reaching US\$1 trillion by 2030, there is scope for youth participation in agriculture, with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) also projecting that 60% more food needs to be produced to feed the world by 2050,” said the Minister.

He highlighted that Africa’s food demand continues to outstrip domestic supply by about 20% with an average import bill of US\$80 billion growing at 6% annually, but unpredicted economic crises precipitated by natural calamities and international conflict such as the with Ukraine-Russia war and Covid-19 may continue to happen from time to time, hence Africa must improve its food independence and security.

He recommended that to redress the existing challenges, there was need to sustain regional integration as provided for in various ratified

documents under the AU, SADC and other bodies.

“There is need to enhance intra-African trade considering the comparative and competitive advantages and to establish robust financing mechanisms through local and international organizations to support ongoing individual national initiatives, programmes, projects and innovations,” he said.

Parliamentarians must continue to advocate for harmonisation, ratification, domestication and implementation of SADC Protocols, treaties and other decisions at member state level, to ensure familiarization of Parliamentarians with the objectives, priorities and decisions of SADC and other national, regional and international priorities, programmes and projects for agriculture sector development, he said.

Bashe called for sustained Public Private Partnership (PPP) to attract more investment into the agricultural sector and proper planning to allocate resources for sustainable growth of the sector by linking the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.

The Plenary Assembly is the SADC PF’s apex decision-making body. It meets twice a year. This is the fourth time that the Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania is hosting the SADC Parliamentary Forum Plenary Assembly Session, according to SADC PF Secretary General, Ms. Boemo Sekgoma.

The National Assembly of Seychelles is being represented at the plenary by a delegation of three Members of Parliament led by Honourable Roger Mancienne, Speaker of the National Assembly and President of the SADC Parliamentary Forum.

Joint committees want protection of strategic assets against debt

A RECOMMENDATION was made to the 53rd SADC-PF Plenary Assembly Session for SADC member parliaments to review the normative framework for using strategic national assets and to dissociate them from foreign ownership.

Hon Dithapelo Keorapetse of Botswana made the call on 4 July, 2023 when he tabled a motion for the adoption of the report of the Joint Session of Standing Committees on Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources; Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment; Human and Social Development and Special Programmes and Democratisation, Governance and Human Rights, to the 53rd Plenary Assembly held in Arusha, Tanzania, from 01-08 July, 2023.

Hon. Nadine Mangabu of the Democratic Republic of Congo seconded the motion. She said Africa was lagging behind in adopting strict rules to control foreign investment in strategic and sensitive assets and advanced national technologies.



Hon Dithapelo Keorapetse of Botswana

She said SADC parliaments should legislate to protect and regulate the use of these assets to

preserve the heritage of the states and insulate the assets against the execution by foreign creditors.

Hon Keorapetse urged SADC states to find innovative ways of attracting foreign direct investment, instead of relying on selling assets, especially land, to foreigners, as a means to improve Foreign Direct Investment receipts, given that such FDIs would be one-off payments.

The Joint Session urged SADC states to leverage on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to promote sustainable intra-Africa investments to generate wealth that could be absorbed within Africa.

They also encouraged SADC states to submit to Parliament, major debt instruments that were to bind successive governments, for approval to improve good governance, transparency and accountability in the management of public funds, especially where such funds are utilized to acquire or construct strategic or sensitive assets.





Hon. Nadine Mangabu of the Democratic Republic of Congo

In addition, the Session encouraged SADC states to institute legal oversight bodies or agencies to monitor the contracting of foreign debt by all public bodies or departments to ensure there were no hidden debt or guarantees through complex organizational structures.

Hon Keorapetse urged Parliaments to push for the domestication of the SADC Model Law on Public Financial Management (PFM) adopted by the 51st Plenary Assembly so as to heighten parliamentary control over the public funds, including government debt operations.

In addition, the report urged SADC Parliamentarians to enact laws to provide for transparency in foreign debt instruments, and a renegotiation of terms of foreign debt where these contained stringent foreclosure procedures on strategic state assets.

The Joint Session further urged the SADC Parliamentary Forum to develop a Model Law on the Management of Strategic and Sensitive State Assets, which should also encompass issues relating to attachment of such assets to debt obligations and the need to preserve clean FDIs for sustainable economic growth.

The Joint Session stressed that the impact of public debt on strategic assets would be recurrent, especially as many debt instruments accumulated over decades were tied to strategic national assets.

The Joint Session of the Standing Committees was held at the Radisson Blu Hotel, OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, South Africa on 09 May, 2023 under the theme “Parliament’s role in Legislating for Strategic and Sensitive Assets, Taking into Account the Security of the Nation, while Encouraging Investments”.

During the Joint Session, Consultant Eva Jhala made a presentation covering the regional historical background and giving a perspective on legislation and policy on the protection of strategic

and sensitive assets.

She explained Africa’s progress on investment policies, addressing risks to essential security interests as well as changing policies relating to investments in national strategic and sensitive assets.

Ms. Jhala explained parliament’s role in legislating for strategic and sensitive assets and the SADC-PF’s role in creating the Model Law for the Protection of Strategic and Sensitive Assets.

The Joint Session noted that many countries had scrapped barriers to trans-border capital flows and abolished exceptions to national treatment to facilitate the acquisition, ownership, control, or operation of national strategic or sensitive assets by foreigners.

This, they said, had created economic opportunities for host economies and multilateral enterprises to



South African MP Hon. Seiso Joel Mohai.

abundantly benefit. However, these opportunities could be tainted with risks, including those related to the host country’s essential security interests.

Contributing to the debate on the Report of the Joint Session, South African MP Hon. Seiso Joel Mohai said it was the duty of parliamentarians to protect national sovereignty by striving to maintain control over economic and financial resources and ensuring that external influences did not compromise national interests or hinder autonomous decisions.

He said one measure to protect national sovereignty was the responsible handling of debt associated with state assets.

“In cases of debt default, it is crucial to establish

mechanisms to protect these assets from undue influence or seizure by international creditors,” he added.

He said transparency was the cornerstone for good governance as it enabled citizens to hold representatives accountable for their actions, adding that transparency not only reinforced the trust between governments and its citizens but also served to deter corrupt practices, fostering an environment of integrity and accountability.

In his contribution, Hon. Prof. Nqosa Mahao of Lesotho said courtesy of SADC, Lesotho has been working on comprehensive political and constitutional reforms in the last few years to ensure institutions better served the people.

He said the reforms included constitutional reforms, depoliticising and professionalising the public service, the security sector, media and several other areas of importance.

According to the Professor, the reforms strengthened the oversight role of Parliament and endeavoured to mainstream the work of the Human Rights Commission for the benefit of the people.

Responding to the debate, Hon. D. Keorapetse said Africa was resource endowed and had attracted a lot of foreign investors to exploit its strategic assets. In view of less domestic investment, there had been challenges in the management and protection of strategic assets.

He said it was important to improve inter-Africa trade and have home-grown solutions using institutions like the African Development Bank.

He said the Joint Session agreed to recommend for the development of a model law on the management and protection of sensitive and strategic assets as it would help push for standardisation of investment conditions in SADC region.



Hon. Prof. Nqosa Mahao of Lesotho

Parliaments share progress reports since 52nd Plenary

HEADS of delegations to the 53rd Plenary Assembly Session presented reports on progress in implementing decisions taken at the 52nd Plenary Assembly which took place in Kinshasa, DRC from 01-11 December, 2022.

Presenting Angola's report, Hon. Pedro Sebastião said his country continued to implement programmes to harmonise the political, economic and social order in line with regional cooperation and integration.

He said Angola was implementing a Child Protection Programme, a Literacy and Youth and Adult Education Intensification Programme while promoting local development and combating poverty. Additionally, Angola was implementing a programme of social monetary transfers, a gender and women's empowerment programme, and was supporting efforts to eradicate child labour.

The head of the delegation from Botswana, Hon. Pono Moatlhodi said monitoring the implementation of resolutions of the 52nd Plenary Assembly was still at infancy although many of the resolutions also addressed programmes that his Parliament was dealing with. He added that his Parliament would continue exercising greater oversight to ensure implementation at national level.

Hon. Rev. Singumat. T. Mossai from the Democratic Republic of Congo said his Parliament was lobbying the Executive to support transformation of the SADC-PF into a regional parliament.

"Parliament reaffirms commitment to continue advocacy with government and remains seized with this matter until authority is granted," he added.

Hon Mossai said the DRC Parliament had initiated a Bill on agriculture regarding food, natural resources as well as trade, industry, finance and investments.



Hon. Princess Kasune from Zambia.

He said the Presidency, through the National Service Programme, contributed to efforts to revive agriculture to combat food insecurity, and integrate youths into farming.

From Eswatini, Hon Senator Isaac Magagula said his Parliament had passed bills and enacted laws which were now more aligned to the Eswatini Constitution.

He said the Parliament of Eswatini had conducted public hearings, tabled and debated motions and domesticated SADC model laws. Eswatini had also ratified treaties and introduced a farming subsidy and a Youth Empowerment Development Fund.

He said Eswatini had reviewed its Election Act to attain 50/50 gender parity and increased SRHR motions tabled and evidence-based debates to declare Gender Based Violence (GBV) a national emergency.

Presenting Malawi's report, Hon. Aisha Adams Mambo, Second Deputy Speaker, said her country

had ratified several international conventions, enacted a number of laws and adopted policies to protect the rights of the child, support the elimination of child marriages while protecting children already in marriage.

Hon Adams Mambo said despite progress towards involving young people in SRH policy making, notable gaps remained between policy and practice in that youth in some areas failed to access SRH services, and youth with disabilities were disproportionately impacted in this regard.

Hon. Phillipus Wido Katamelo of Namibia said his country was addressing the effects of climate change by putting human rights at the centre of all actions and embracing economic, social, cultural and political diversity in its quest to empower the most affected groups.

He said in line with the Paris Agreement on climate change, Namibia recognized the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

He urged member states to collaborate with higher learning institutions to conduct extensive research on renewable energies for the best cost-effective solutions to provide renewable energy to SADC.

Hon. Regina Bistoquet of Seychelles said the National Assembly in her country encouraged parliamentarians to ensure electoral processes favoured women in order for SADC to harnesses the demographic dividend of its women and youth.

She said SADC states must work with civil society organisations and other stakeholders to engage the youth, particularly girls and young women, including people with disabilities, on SRH issues and harmful practices.

She said the government had appointed women to top positions such as the Ombudsman, Principal Secretaries, Judges, chief executive officers, boards of directors and even appointed the first female chief fire officer in 2022.



Hon. Pedro Sebastião from Angola



Hon. Pono Moatlhodi from Botswana



Senator Isaac Magagula from Eswatini



Hon. Rev. Singumat. T. Mossai of DRC





*Tanzania's
Hon. Selemani. J. Zedi*

From South Africa, Hon. N. Mapisa-Nqakula said on 31 January, 2023, the State President had signed the SADC Agreement Amending Treaty which would lead to the creation of the SADC Parliament as a SADC institution.

She said South Africa remained committed to the integration of the region and looked forward to the requisite twelve out of sixteen signatures for the Amendment Treaty to come into force being obtained.

She highlighted that parliamentarians continued raising questions and awareness on child marriage and gender-based violence as the country's statutory law still provides for a minimum age for marriage ranging from 15 to 18 years.

She admitted that the country continued to grapple with load shedding and had adopted various means to address it, leading to tangible results, evidenced by reduced power cuts in recent weeks.

Tanzania's Hon. Selemani. J. Zedi said Parliament passed several laws supporting gender equality, women's advancement and youth development and directing local government authorities to set aside 10% of their revenue to provide women, youths and persons with disability interest-free loans.

He said the Tanzania Medical Supply Department



*Hon. Aisha Adams
from Malawi*

was authorised to procure pharmaceuticals for SADC countries, but only a few states had shown interest in procuring their pharmaceutical supplies under this consolidated arrangement as agreed.

He said to improve agriculture and increase food production, the government introduced the 'Borehole for the Farmer' programme and established agricultural blocks with irrigation systems for the local community to build a better tomorrow for women and youth.

Presenting Zambia's report, Hon. Princess Kasune said the Government of Zambia strongly supported the transformation of the SADC-PF into a regional parliament with the State President convinced that transformation would cement the socio-economic and the political development of the region.

"This august house may wish to note that there are some internal processes the country must fulfil before the Agreement Amending the Treaty is signed," she added.

The MP said Zambia was implementing a programme with support from the European Union, to stop sexual and gender-based violence and child marriage and that Cabinet had approved revising the legal age of marriage from 16 to 19 years.

On behalf of the Zimbabwe delegation, Hon.



*Hon. Phillipus Wido Katamelo
of Namibia*

Anele Ndebele said his Parliament had amended the Marriages Act to ban child marriage and a number of other Acts had been amended to reflect this position and provide for stiffer penalties for rape, especially of minors.

In addition, the Ministry of Justice had established a victim-friendly court to hear cases of children's rights infringements.

He said the Portfolio Committee on Health and Child Care held several public hearings on sexual health education where divergent views came on whether condoms should be made available to schoolgirls. Churches and traditional leaders opposed the issuance of condoms to girls and advocated intensified moral education.

There was also a recommendation to engage youths in discussions on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement. Further, Parliament passed a law urging tertiary institutions to set up innovation and industrial hubs to contribute to successful implementation of the Agreement.

The MP said Zimbabwe had amended its Constitution allowing a total of sixty women parliamentarians to be elected on proportional representation basis, with six coming from each of the country's ten provinces.



*Hon Regina Esparon
of Seychelles*



*From South Africa,
Hon. N. Mapisa-Nqakula*



*Hon. Anele Ndebele
from Zimbabwe*

IPU promotes peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies – Report

SOUTHERN Africa Development Community (SADC) Parliaments have been urged to implement resolutions of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) assembly including the Manama Declaration and provide feedback thereof in a timely manner to the IPU Secretary General.

This was contained in a report on the outcomes of the 146th Assembly of the IPU and Related Meetings that was held in Manama, Bahrain from 11-15 March 2023, and was submitted to the SADC Parliamentary Forum's 53rd Plenary Assembly Session by Honourable Advocate Jacob Francis Nzwidamilimo Mudenda, Speaker of the Parliament of Zimbabwe.

The call was in line with the IPU Statutes and Rules as well as the IPU Strategy which places emphasis on implementation of resolutions of the IPU.

Adv. Mudenda said the 146th Assembly, which was attended by more than 1700 participants drawn from 130 countries, including sixty Speakers of Parliament, adopted by consensus the Manama Declaration on the overarching theme "Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: Fighting intolerance".

Through the Manama Declaration, Parliamentarians pledged to fight inequality through rights-based economic and social policies that are inclusive and that uphold equality and dignity for all citizens.

"The declaration also urges Parliaments to ensure the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 - leaving no one behind - as the best hope for peace, democracy and sustainable development for all. Furthermore, the Declaration celebrates diversity," Adv. Mudenda said.

He added: "Accordingly, Parliaments are called upon to enact appropriate legislation which addresses issues of intolerance of marginalized groups as well as all forms of violence linked to religion, fundamentalism, xenophobia and racism."

Hon Mudenda said the Assembly also adopted the resolution submitted by the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security entitled "Cybercrimes: The new risks to global security".

This resolution underscored the need for international cooperation to address cybercrimes as well as to protect global peace, security and economic stability while upholding human rights, including freedom of speech. In this context,



Honourable Advocate Jacob Francis Mudenda, Speaker of the Parliament of Zimbabwe.

the resolution reinforced the responsibility of Parliaments in building a regulatory framework to protect citizens in cyberspace in the same manner as in the physical world.

The resolution further noted that cybercrimes may constitute a serious threat to democratic processes, especially as they may cause interference with elections through cyber security breaches or false media. The resolution acknowledged that women, young people and children were among the most vulnerable and bore the brunt of cyber aggressions through the internet.

Adv. Mudenda also told the Plenary Assembly that the 146th Assembly adopted the resolution on the emergency item entitled "Raising awareness and calling for action on the serious humanitarian crises affecting the people of Afghanistan, the Syria Arab Republic, Ukraine, Yemen and other countries and on the particular vulnerability of women and children".

"The resolution calls inter alia, on the international community to collaborate in order to protect human lives, alleviate suffering, safeguarding human dignity as well as guarantee access to basic services such as food, medical care, water and shelter for all, regardless of their origins through legal policy measures at the national level, in response to human suffering arising from global conflicts," he said.

Also adopted was the resolution submitted by the

Standing Committee on Sustainable Development entitled, "Parliamentary efforts in achieving negative carbon emission balances of forests."

The resolution acknowledged the existential threat to agricultural food security caused by deforestation and land degradation. With an estimated 1.6 billion people depending on forests for subsistence, livelihoods, employment and incomes, the resolution expressed deep concern over the severe environmental damage caused by reckless deforestation.

"Thus, Parliaments are enjoined to enact legislation which commits to net zero deforestation and forest rejuvenation in order to maintain a balanced biodiversity ecosystem of flora and fauna," he said.

The Africa Geopolitical Group proposed an Emergency Item entitled, "Creation of a Global fund for countries vulnerable to natural disasters to address loss and damage from climate change" but that item failed to garner the required two thirds majority vote required for inclusion on the agenda of the Assembly.

The IPU Assembly was officially opened by the Deputy Prime Minister, Shaikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa on behalf of His Majesty, the King Hamad bin Isa Khalifa.

His Majesty the King drew on Bahrain's historical core values of tolerance, coexistence and peace,



which the IPU should emulate in line with the theme. He reaffirmed Bahrain's commitment to advancing collaborative efforts to advance international peace and security undergirded by the principles of the United Nations Charter and International Law.

His Excellency, Ahmed Bin Salam Almusalam, Speaker of the Council of Representatives, underscored the need for collective action in fostering peaceful communities anchored on tolerance and coexistence. He urged the Assembly to foster Parliamentary diplomacy and adopt resolutions that could respond to the global challenges of intolerance, which threatened peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies.

In her remarks, Her Excellency, Sheika Haya Al Khalifa, Council of Presidents of the United Nations General Assembly, focused on the socio-economic and political impact of wars and conflicts, including untold human suffering, loss of lives and displacements. She, thus, urged Parliaments to promote the values of dialogue, tolerance and coexistence.

In a video message, United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, highlighted that the 146th Assembly was being held in the midst of a myriad of interconnected global challenges including climate change, conflicts, xenophobia, intolerance of religious differences and hate speech.

He urged the IPU to champion unity in diversity and collaborative efforts in ensuring socio-economic policies for just and equitable societies.

In his address, IPU Secretary General Marting Chungong, said the 130 countries represented at the meeting reflected the diversity of the world in service of humankind. Accordingly, he said deliberations were expected to be representative of the people in search of peaceful coexistence, tolerance and inclusivity to uphold the core values



of the founding fathers of the IPU, Cremer and Passy Prize which espoused diplomatic dialogue to resolve human conflicts.

“Cremer-Passy prize is awarded by the IPU and is intended to reward a Parliamentarian or a group of Parliamentarians who make outstanding contribution to the defense and promotion of the objectives of this organization and to a more united, peaceful, sustainable and equitable world”.

The President of the IPU, Mr. Duarte Pacheco, applauded the choice of the theme, particularly as the Assembly was being held against a backdrop of increasing global polarization characterized by escalating conflicts, human rights violations such as those of Members of Parliament, terrorism and hate speech against marginalized groups. He urged Member Parliaments to use diplomacy to cultivate a culture of trust, peaceful coexistence

and tolerance.

The IPU is scheduled to elect a new President for a three-year term at the conclusion of the October meetings in Luanda, Angola. The IPU President is the political head of the Organisation.

The Plenary Assembly later agreed to support the candidature of the Right Honourable Dr Tulia Ackson, Speaker of the Parliament of Tanzania, ahead of three other candidates from the Africa Geopolitical Group to contest the position of President of the IPU.

The other candidates were Hon. Mergane Kanoute, the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Senegal; Rt. Hon. Catherine Gotani Hara, Speaker of the Parliament of Malawi; and Hon. Adv. Jacob Francis Nzwidamilimo Mudenda, Speaker of the Parliament of Zimbabwe.

TIFI Committee roots for tighter debt management

The Standing Committee on Trade, industry, Finance and Investment has urged member states to strengthen their public debt management by establishing independent public debt management offices; ensuring cooperation with Government agencies; and publishing yearly reports on compliance; as well as making use of reports by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and think tanks.

This is part of a raft of recommendations presented by Honourable Dithapelo Keorapetse of Botswana, the Vice Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment (TIFI) when he tabled the Committee's report on 4th July to the 53rd SADC PF Plenary Assembly that took

place in the United Republic of Tanzania, from July 1 to 8, 2023.

Hon Ruth Adriani Mandes of Angola seconded the committee's report.

The Standing Committee also called for the executive to report constantly on adherence to the debt-to-GDP limit to ensure debt sustainability; enhance transparency and allocative efficiency of limited resources in the wake of constrained borrowing.

“Member states should support the requirement to move towards the convergence limit by setting up robust organizational structures, including but



Honourable Dithapelo Keorapetse of Botswana, the Vice Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment.

not limited to, the establishment of an Economic Development Ministry or agency; strengthening compliance or audit within the bureaucracy; and, provision of clear operational guidance on debt accumulation,” the Committee advised.

The Standing Committee encouraged the Plenary Assembly to recommend for the adoption of uniformity in the legal frameworks relating to public financial management as part of efforts to maintain macro-economic stability.

“Adherence to debt limits, therefore, should become an indicator of fiscal discipline which is an important element in achieving regional financial stability,” the Committee recommended.

The Standing Committee on TIFI further urged SADC Parliaments to closely watch exceptions to safeguards in legislation, for example the escape clause which, in some cases, resulted in large deviations from existing rules, making it difficult to quickly return to existing rules. Such clauses were commonly resorted to during the Covid-19 era.

The TIFI Standing Committee drew attention to the need to proactively advocate for budget-making legislatures which had the capacity to amend or reject budget proposals of the Executive so as to give Parliament the real power over the purse. It advised SADC Parliaments to insist on being better structured to reflect the status and the role of Parliament as an institution empowered to exercise oversight over government actions, rather than a by-stander in the governance matrix.

To benchmark on best practices, the Standing Committee urged SADC Member States to research on countries such as Denmark that have kept the debt-to-GDP ratio at sustainably low levels.



*Hon. Talitha Monnakgotla
from Botswana.*

It recommended that the Plenary Assembly implores SADC Member States to leverage on their natural resources to support public expenditure rather than resort to borrowing. Botswana, which had leveraged on its diamonds to support economic development, was cited as an example.

SADC Parliaments were implored to heighten their advocacy efforts for capping of debt-servicing costs through, inter alia, domesticating the SADC Model Law on Public Financial Management (PFM). In this regard, the Plenary Assembly was asked to advise SADC Member States to learn from countries which capped debt servicing costs at 10% of revenue.

The Plenary Assembly was further urged to encourage Member States to ensure that their domestic legislation, like the SADC Model Law on PFM, made provisions on seeking Parliamentary approval in the event of a windfall, unexpected or unplanned revenue such as special drawing rights.



*Hon Ruth Adriani Mandes
of Angola.*

The Committee called on SADC Parliaments to scrutinise agreements on the exploration of mineral resources, including lithium and oil, to ensure that stringent clauses were incorporated into the agreements to maximise benefits to the host countries.

The Plenary Assembly was asked to implore Parliaments to strengthen their oversight role on public debt management by scrutinising borrowing to avoid loans meant for consumptive purposes including opaque bank loans which tended to feed into corruption and corruptive tendencies.

Parliaments were urged to watch out for potential breach of loan agreements within the dominion of international law, especially in case of changes in executive management, where new incumbents unilaterally refused to be held accountable to



*Namibian legislator
Hon. Vipuakuje Muharukua*

previous governments’ commitments.

The Standing Committee urged the Plenary Assembly to emphasize that SADC Parliaments must continue to monitor debt accumulation by employing various tools such as the public debt-to-GDP ratio, interest payments-to-revenue ratio among others, as indicators of macro-economic convergence, taking into account the sustainability of the debt.

Member Parliaments were encouraged to effectively engage the Executive to ensure that government borrowing and expenditure were kept within reasonable confines to avoid the crises associated with over-borrowing.

The Standing Committee received presentations from two renowned economists, Mr. Pepukai Chivore, economist and former Director, Parliamentary Budget Office of Zimbabwe and Mr. Simon Mtambo, Deputy Director, Parliamentary Budget Office in Zambia.

The main objective of the meeting was to discuss “Debt Ceiling” as one of the measures of ensuring debt sustainability among SADC States. In this regard, it was noted that parliamentarians had a key role to oversee debt contraction and ensure that debt was kept within sustainable levels.

In his presentation, Mr Chivore focused on the need for governments to ensure the level and rate of growth in their public debt was sustainable and could be serviced while meeting the cost and risk objectives.

He emphasised the importance of laws, regulations and policies stipulating the limits of external public debt borrowing, which must be linked to the country’s gross domestic product and exports.



Mr Chivore noted that in the USA, a shutdown was implemented whenever federal debt approached its statutory limit, unless the Congress and the President raised that limit.

For his part, Mr Mtambo outlined the Zambian government's commitment to fiscal consolidation by increasing revenues and cutting down on expenditure as a prerequisite for achieving macro-economic stability.

He explained that the role of the National Assembly in Public Debt Management in Zambia should be understood from the broader context of public finance management. Article 198 of the Constitution of Zambia (Amendment) Act provided for the principles of public finance management, which included sustainable public borrowing to ensure inter-generational equity.

He highlighted that the National Assembly of Zambia drew its mandate from the Constitution and that one of its functions was to oversee the performance of the Executive functions by, among others, approving public debt before it was contracted.

During the debate on the TIFI Report, Hon. Talitha Monnakgotla from Botswana observed that the report and its recommendations would help member states implement sustainable measures to ensure debt was kept at acceptable levels.

She advised member states to adopt strong financial management measures to ensure cash flow stability in their corporate management practices as this would reduce cases of corruption.

The MP called for good oversight measures to ensure that public finances were managed well with accountability for public expenditures.

In an effort to share best practices, Hon. S. J. Zedi of Tanzania sought clarity on the measures that Namibia had taken to maintain its cost-debt ratio at 10%.

In response, Namibian legislator Hon. Vipukuje Muharukua stated that debt on its own was not necessarily bad, unless the money was not used for intended purposes.

He said as SADC-PF was trying to transform into a fully-fledged regional parliament, legislators should come up with a mechanism to monitor the debt-to-GDP ratio of every SADC country.

"That is one of the things allowing Namibia to have a target of servicing its debt at 10%," Hon. Muharukua said.

He warned against politicians who borrow for electoral cycles and implored parliament to keep such practices in check through their oversight roles.

Hon. Keorapetse of Botswana noted that the call by the TIFI Committee to look at debt ceilings emanated from the African experience where international financial institutions, especially the Brenton Woods institutions, pushed debt down Africa's throats in order to influence public policy.

Hon Keorapetse said Namibia's example came up because of the need to look into the debt contracts as most African parliaments were kept in the dark about the terms of their governments' debt contracts.

FANR Committee brings food insecurity issue to the fore

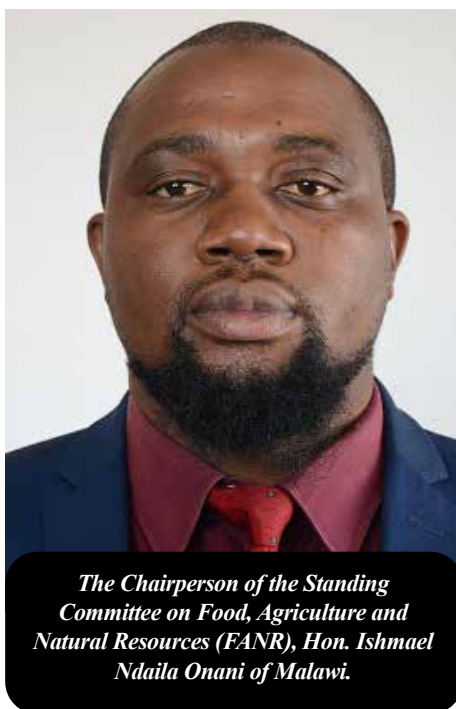
A recommendation has been made for SADC-PF Plenary Assembly to urge parliamentarians to demonstrate willingness to deal with food insecurity and hunger issues by making progress towards allocation of 10% of their discretionary budget to the agriculture sector, in line with the Malabo commitments.

The recommendation was tabled on 4 July 2023 before the 53rd Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC PF which was meeting in Arusha, Tanzania from 1-8 July 2023, by the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR), Hon. Ishmael Ndaila Onani, Member of Parliament from Malawi.

Hon. Hawa S. Mwaifunga, the Vice Chairperson of FANR Standing Committee seconded the report saying the agricultural sector plays a key role in socio-economic development of the SADC region.

The Standing Committee on FANR held one physical meeting on Tuesday, 9th May, 2023, to consider the theme: "The Situation of Hunger and Food Insecurity in the SADC Region, Challenges Fuelling Food Insecurity, Major International Goals and African Agenda, Investments and Performance of Malabo Commitments, Environment that can attract the Youth to Invest in Agriculture".

During the meeting, the Committee received one presentation to introduce members to a project



called Strengthening Social Accountability and Oversight in Health and Agriculture in the Southern Region (2016-2024) being implemented by Partnership for Social Accountability Alliance. The Committee received another presentation on the situation of hunger and food insecurity in the SADC region, challenges fuelling food insecurity, major international goals and the African Agenda,

investments and performance of the Malabo Commitments.

Arising from these presentations, the Committee included in the tabled report a call that the Plenary Assembly encourages Member States to ensure that SADC citizens, especially those living in rural areas, access and use clean energy sources such as gas and solar in order to eliminate the use of unsustainable sources of energy such as charcoal and firewood which often lead to the indiscriminate destruction of forests, which constitute a safe source of food.

The Committee also recommended that SADC Member States be prompted to prioritise the use of clean energy, given that sources such as charcoal and firewood often promote gender discrimination through collection and distribution streams.

"Plenary must urge Member States to seek cheaper alternative sources of fertilizers which can be affordable to small scale farmers, thereby improving crop yields," Hon Onani said.

In addition, the FANR Standing Committee urged SADC Member States to speed up the establishment of the SADC Parliament with clear model law-making functions.

The committee also recommended that SADC Parliaments be encouraged to develop national and regional joint agriculture review platforms



and to leverage on and actualise the potential job creation from the agriculture sector by investing in the sector as it was critical to supporting economic growth and reducing poverty and food insecurity.

SADC Member States were further encouraged to adopt a gender-based right to food and nutrition framework in all future reviews of policies and strategies.

The Committee further recommended that the Plenary Assembly calls for SADC Member States to ensure the GDP generated from the agriculture sector is utilized innovatively to reduce the debt ceiling and overall government borrowing.

During its meeting on 9 May, 2023, the FANR Standing Committee concluded that the impact of climate change and extreme weather events such as cyclones on the agriculture sector have been profound.

The Committee contended that agriculture could contribute to rural development through job creation, especially for young people, women and other vulnerable social groups.

In the context of the effects of climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic, the FANR Committee called for additional investment in agriculture to reduce the consequences of disasters and support recovery efforts and progress towards achieving the Malabo Commitments and sustainable development goals.

The Committee noted that Southern Africa was among the most vulnerable regions to climate change which had caused devastating effects on social economic development, agriculture, human security and conflicts, resulting in deteriorating access to assets such as water and arable land, worsening food insecurity and the humanitarian situation.

The Committee, therefore, noted that Parliamentarians' strategic position was



Hon. Hawa S. Mwaifunga the Vice Chairperson of FANR Standing Committee.

fundamental to promoting enhanced public investments in the agriculture sector, such as the provision of public goods and services, including infrastructure, energy, research and development, especially in rural areas.

Hon Onani also presented to the 53rd Plenary Assembly a report on the Committee's working visit to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

He said that five members of the FANR Standing Committee participated in a working visit to Venezuela from 29 March to 4 April 2023.

"The purpose of the visit was to capacitate the SADC Parliamentarians to effectively interrogate energy challenges facing the SADC region, taking into account developments within and beyond SADC," he said.

The delegation held several engagements with various stakeholders during the visit.

In seconding the report, Hon. Mwaifunga said the agricultural sector provides a livelihood including employment and income for the majority of the people living in rural areas.

He quoted SADC statistics for 2013, indicating that agriculture contributed approximately 20% of the region's GDP in that year.

"It is widely recognised that women play a significant role in agriculture in the region but they face enormous challenges that hinder their full potential as farmers," Hon. Mwaifunga said. In some member states, women perform more than 70% of work in the agricultural sector but, they are ever excluded from many decision-making processes.

"At regional level, significant attempts are being taken to mainstream gender regional instruments although implementation is generally weak," Mwaifunga noted.

He highlighted the nexus between the agriculture sector and sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and said agriculture productivity was impacted by GBV and poor access to SRHR.

"Globally, research shows that women agriculture workers experience high level of violence and harassment by supervisors and colleagues in the field. HIV has also impacted this sector as a result of gender inequalities. In light of the above, SADC parliaments need to stiffen laws on SRHR and GBV in order meet the perpetrators of the vice," Hon. Mwaifunga said, adding that this could help protect farmers who may become victims of GBV.

"I reassert that SADC member parliaments must be seen to be making an effort to move progressively and fulfil the Malabo commitment by allocating 10% of their GDP budget to the agricultural sector. This will be highly beneficial to all SADC Member States," he added.

DGHR Committee calls out transnational corporations on human rights

A RECOMMENDATION has been made to the SADC-PF Plenary Assembly to reaffirm the centrality of Parliamentarians in advancing the concept of business and human rights in the extractive sector in Southern Africa so as to ensure that transnational corporations (TNCs) comply with human rights and environmental laws and that remedies are available and accessible to citizens in case of violations.

This is one of the calls contained in the Report

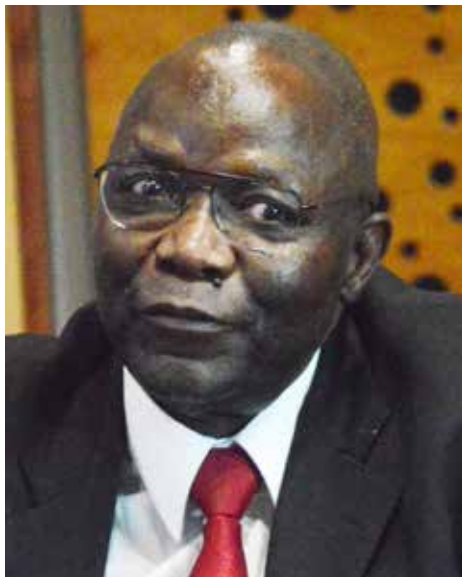
of the Standing Committee on Democratisation, Governance and Human Rights (DGHR) tabled on 4 July 2023 at the 53rd Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC Parliamentary Forum that was hosted in Arusha, Republic of Tanzania, from 1st to 8th July, 2023.

The Chairperson of the DGHR Committee, Honourable Dought Ndiweni Member of Parliament in Zimbabwe, tabled the Report and said SADC Parliamentarians must raise awareness

among stakeholders in their respective countries, including relevant government ministries, regarding the proposed UN Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights and encourage robust participation in the process to ensure the final outcome covers all human rights in order to curb the impunity of TNCs.

Hon. Utaara Mootu, Member of Parliament from Namibia, seconded the motion and raised the gender issue which is very relevant in terms of





*The Chairperson of the DGHR
Committee Honourable Dought Ndiweni*

the human rights violations associated with the extraction of natural resources.

The Report tabled by Hon Ndiweni urged parliamentarians to prioritise the strengthening of their oversight function by supporting the adoption of the UN binding treaty as this would enhance accountability by governments in discharging their regulatory role and establish effective measures to protect states from corporate capture.

The Committee also urged SADC Parliaments to strengthen the representative role of SADC legislators by amplifying their voice in adopting the binding treaty on business and human rights and leveraging collaboration with partners, including civil society organisations.

In line with the already entrenched model law-making approach, the Committee encouraged the SADC PF Secretariat to explore the feasibility of developing model textual provisions for the binding treaty to serve as a benchmark for negotiations and subsequent domestication at national level.

“This calls for SADC national parliaments to curb corporate impunity through strong legislation at national level; and for parliamentarians to support the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights’ resolution on Business and Human Rights in Africa and advocate its speedy implementation,” said Hon Ndiweni. He added that this would ensure accountability and access to remedy for business-related human rights violations in Africa, particularly for the marginalised and vulnerable populations.

The Committee further urged for SADC Parliaments to advocate for the alignment of regional natural resources governance frameworks



Hon. Utaara Mootu from Namibia.

with the Business and Human Rights Concept to develop National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights.

“The Secretariat is urged to prioritise the training of MPs in business and human rights through collaboration with partners to buttress evidence-based approaches in promoting the respect of human rights in the conduct of business within the SADC natural resources sector,” said Hon Ndiweni.

In preparing its report, the DGHR Standing Committee held its statutory meeting on 9 May 2023 under the theme: “Towards a Rights-Based Approach to the Conduct of Business Within the Natural Resources Sector in the SADC Region: What Can Parliamentarians Do?”

The committee agreed that a rights-based approach to the conduct of business in the extractive sector was relevant to Southern Africa in view of the region’s endowment with both solid and liquid mineral resources.

“If properly utilised, these resources could be a boon for the progressive realisation of environmental, economic, social, and cultural rights, including supporting social protection programmes, creating jobs, eradicating poverty, and reducing inequalities,” noted the Committee.

The need to transition to renewable energies had triggered increased demand and exploitation of mineral resources in Southern Africa as the world raced towards net zero emission targets.

The decarbonisation of the energy and transport sectors, for instance, required minerals like lithium, cobalt and copper to manufacture batteries and other green technologies.



Hon Paula Kooper of Namibia.

The Committee noted that the SADC region was home to significant deposits of these critical minerals: DRC produces about 70% of the world’s cobalt; South Africa has the largest manganese reserves; Mozambique has huge reserves of graphite, and Zimbabwe has largest deposits of lithium in Africa.

The Committee highlighted the need to maximise the potential of the region’s transitional minerals for the benefit of citizens and significant contribution to the SADC Vision 2050, Africa’s Agenda 2063 and the UN sustainable development agenda.

It was noted that the UN Human Rights Council had passed a resolution for the drafting of an international legally binding instrument on TNCs and other business enterprises which was sponsored by Ecuador and South Africa. The process was continuing under the intergovernmental Working Group at the UNHRC in Geneva, chaired by Ecuador.

The Committee highlighted some of the critical components of the binding instrument which would be in SADC’s interest.

Topping the list was gender justice - building an effective tool for corporate accountability by incorporating an African gender perspective.

Contributing to the debate on the DGHR report, Hon Darren Bergman, Member of Parliament from South Africa said the world was moving away from democratic rights to what is now called human security.

“When we talk about human security, which is well encompassed in Africa’s Agenda 2063, what we look at is democracy, human rights and the



Hon Dithapelo Keorapetse of Botswana.



Hon Victor Lumayi of Zambia.



Hon Darren Bergman from South Africa.

rule of law as the basic tenets of human security. Basically in democracy, we look at free and fair elections where the people get the government they deserve or elect and under human rights, we do everything in our power to ensure that we protect our citizens," he said.

Hon Bergman said because Africa must find African solutions to African problems, there was need to strengthen laws through model laws and get countries to adopt to these model laws.

Hon Victor Lumayi, Member of Parliament from Zambia highlighted numerous challenges of doing business within the natural resources sector.

He said the challenges may speak to environmental problems that affect the surrounding communities including water pollution, land degradation, and air pollution.

Hon Lumayi said SADC countries had a lot of natural resources which should be well utilized. "We need instruments that protect our citizens from losing their land, especially where they

become vulnerable to investors," he said. He added that sometimes countries were unaware how much natural resources they were losing because some investors "do not allow us near where they are mining our copper".

He said in Zambia, parliament had enacted several pieces of legislations to promote forest conservation and management as a means of combating climate change.

Hon Dithapelo Keorapetse, Member of Parliament from Botswana said because many SADC countries would be going to the polls in 2023 and 2024, it was very important to have election observation missions from institutions such as SADC PF to safeguard democracy.

The MP also implored SADC member States to draw from the provisions of the SADC Model Law on Elections as they embarked on reforming their electoral systems.

Hon Paula Kooper of Namibia said poverty was the root cause of many problems as poor people were

often victims of food insecurity, climate change, democracy and violation of human rights, among others. The MP said poverty tended to increase the risk of conflict, which in turn facilitated crime-breeding grounds and security threats.

Responding to the debate, Hon Ndiweni thanked Hon Mootu from Namibia for seconding the motion and raising the gender issue which is very relevant in the human rights violations that were associated with the extraction of natural resources.

"You find that women and youths are involved in gold extraction where they face the brunt of the violation in human rights. The other issue raised by the member is the unity within the SADC region. When we craft these legal frameworks, we need to do it as a block so that there is no divide and rule."

"The quicker we reach our target of having a regional parliament which is going to make binding laws, then all these problems will fall away," Hon Ndiweni.

GEWAYD committee sees business opportunities in climate change

A RECOMMENDATION was made to the SADC-PF 53rd Plenary Assembly for SADC Member States to pass legislation that promotes the use of clean energy in order to mitigate climate change.

The call was made by the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Women Advancement and Youth

Development (GEWAYD) Hon. Shally Josepha Raymond of Tanzania, on 04 July when she tabled the Committee's Report for adoption by the Plenary Assembly held in Arusha, Tanzania from 01-08 July, 2023.

Hon Paula Kooper of Namibia seconded the motion saying the SADC region continued to fight gender inequality with several Member

States struggling to eliminate both the evident and unseen barriers to gender equality.

"The state of affairs in the region is not different from the rest of the continent, where women are disproportionately affected by impacts of climate change - one of the most serious threats women and girls in the SADC region face," Kooper said.



She urged parliamentarians to play a crucial role in ensuring a gender responsive climate and environmental action through their legislation, oversight, representation and budgetary functions.

Hon Raymond recommended that the Plenary Assembly appeals to SADC Member States to consider climate change as presenting business opportunities and urged parliamentarians to persuade their governments to invest in youth innovation for the development of mitigation and adaptive measures such as the production of solar panels, water harvesting equipment and energy conservation appliances.

The Committee implored SADC Member States to find climate change solutions that could address challenges and threats to women's livelihoods, health and safety and for national parliaments to take pragmatic action including voting for enhanced climate change mitigation budgets.

The Committee highlighted the need to capacitate SADC parliamentarians to advocate full operationalisation and resourcing of the Loss and Damage Facility so that countries suffering the effects of climate change should not incur huge debt burdens to reconstruct infrastructure damaged by these extreme weather events.

It also strongly urged SADC parliamentarians to advocate for concessional or grant financing for climate change mitigation rather than embracing loans at commercial rates.

SADC member states were encouraged to integrate climate change solutions into programmes to address gender equality barriers and to enhance gender-sensitive



*The Speaker of Tanzania Parliament,
Hon. Dr Tulia Ackson*

investments in adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and capacity building initiatives.

The SADC-PF and Member Parliaments were urged to facilitate institutional capacity building programmes to provide a strong mechanism for ongoing parliamentary scrutiny, especially relating to women and climate change programmes.

The Committee advised parliamentarians to leverage on their representative role and provide a knowledge link with women constituents as a vital facet of their countries' gender sensitive response and resilience to climate change.

Parliamentarians were further urged to promote the women's voice in the climate change discourse and prioritise women's needs such as water, food security, agriculture, energy, health, disaster management, and

conflict in the development planning and funding processes for climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience.

Another call was for SADC parliamentarians to advocate for improved early warning systems for various extreme weather events to avert devastation.

In preparing the report, the Standing Committee held one statutory meeting on Friday, 12 May, 2023 under the theme "The Role of Parliamentarians in Promoting Gender and Climate Justice Agenda in the SADC Region."

Evidence showed that climate change tended to affect women more negatively than men in five impact areas of agricultural production; food and nutrition security; health; water and energy; and climate-related disaster, migration, and conflict.

The Committee received a presentation from Mr. Titus Gwemende, the Africa Division Director at Open Society Foundation.

The presentation specifically focused on the latest information and evidence regarding how women and girls were disproportionately affected by climate change in the region.

Mr Gwemende highlighted at practical ways through which Parliaments could leverage law-making, oversight, representation, and budgetary powers to ensure gender equality and climate justice.

"Parliaments can identify ways to promote legislation and policies that put women and girls, particularly at grassroots and rural levels, at the centre of the fight for climate justice and a decisive shift towards a greener economy," he said.



Hon Princess Kasune of Zambia



Hon. Talita Monnakgotla of Botswana



Hon. Aisha Adams of Malawi

The Standing Committee heard that SADC region continued to battle the challenge of gender inequality, with several Member States struggling to eliminate both the evident and unseen barriers to gender equality.

After the presentation, Hon. Members engaged in debate on the motion.

Hon Princess Kasune of Zambia made a few submissions related to the effects of climate change, especially on women and girls.

She said women continued to bear the brunt of climate change. In Zambia there had been a lot of deforestation and this has led Parliament to embark on a tree-planting campaign to mitigate the deforestation challenge.

Hon Kasune said as an MP from one of the biggest constituencies in Zambia, with nearly 300 000 people, she was disheartened at the persistently high levels of charcoal usage, with several truckloads of the product being ferried out of her Constituency on daily basis because people had no alternative fuel sources.

The MP said Zambia ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change although it was still to be domesticated. She added that in recognition of the seriousness of the challenges posed by the impact of climate change, Parliament passed the Disaster Management Act to address the issue of climate change.

Hon Kasune added that the Zambian Parliament had a Committee on Sustainable Development Goals to work with the Zambia Parliamentary Conservation Caucus as part of efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change, especially on women and girls.



Hon. Shally Josepha Raymond of Tanzania

Hon. Talita Monnakgotla of Botswana said women in Africa were more negatively affected by climate change than men. This was because women took care of families and raised children, as well as walked long distances to fetch firewood for cooking.

She said the majority of women in rural areas relied on agriculture for food. However, climate change had affected the output despite the fact that government subsidised seed and fertilizer prices to increase production.

The MP noted that Botswana now had a ministry of entrepreneurship, which helped women and youth start small businesses.

Hon. Aisha Adams of Malawi said gender inequality remained one of the greatest issues affecting women development in Africa, with climate change negatively affecting the

SADC region.

Hon Adams said women’s responsibility was huge as they had to make sure their families were provided for, with men sometimes just putting money on the table and women deciding how to use it and whether it was adequate or not.

The legislator said climate change and environmental degradation, had undermined food production by women, posing a household food insecurity threat.

She said climate change had been triggering erratic and extreme weather in Malawi, resulting in chronic water shortages, food and financial insecurity for many, especially for the 82% of the population living in the rural areas, where women accounted for 65% of small-holder farmers.

The Speaker of Tanzania Parliament, Hon. Dr Tulia Ackson said the role of Parliamentarians in promoting the gender and climate change agenda in the SADC Region, would be enhanced if more women were made MPs and they could actually have a greater influence on the issues that concerned them, climate change being one of them.

Hon. Shally Josepha Raymond of Tanzania described climate change as one of the most serious threats facing the world, yet most countries were still poorly equipped to deal with it.

She said there is an inseparable link between gender equality and climate justice, citing evidence of women and girls who often face a disproportionate impact from the effects of environmental degradation and natural disasters and many other aspects of life.

Parliaments urged to protect women’s SRH in emergencies

SADC member states have been urged to continuously pursue the respect, protection and promotion of women’s fundamental human rights irrespective of the state of the physical, geographical and socio-economic environment.

This includes the respect, protection and promotion of sexual and reproductive health in emergency situations.

That call was made by the Chairperson of the SADC PF Standing Committee on Human and Social Development and Special Programmes (HSDSP) Honourable Rosie Bistoquet, Member of Parliament from Seychelles when she tabled

the Committee’s Report before the 53rd Plenary Assembly on 04 July.

Hon. Kassim Hassan Haji of Tanzania seconded the motion for the adoption of the report. She said the motion came at the right time when the region was grappling with the increased incidence of erratic and extreme weather events. He underscored the urgent need to improve disaster management in the region.

This motion addressed critical issues like the intersection between sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in emergency climate change and disaster management. In doing so, the

Standing Committee on the HSDSP hoped that sexual reproductive health (SRH) could be incorporated into the regional and national disaster management framework.

Against this background, Hon. Bistoquet implored parliamentarians to advocate for the ratification, domestication and/or adoption of the various international, continental and regional frameworks such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (2016-2030), the SADC Disaster Risk Reduction Strategic Plan (2018-2030) and the SADC Gender Responsive Disaster Risk Reduction

Strategic Plan and Action Plan (2020-2030).

“These frameworks are anchored on a rights- and gender-based approach to disaster management, despite being implicit on SRH in Emergencies (SRHiE),” said the Chairperson.

The report further urged SADC Parliamentarians to review and reform domestic legislative and institutional frameworks to incorporate the interlinkages between SRH, climate change and disaster management, with a particular focus on the promotion and protection of SRH in emergencies.

The Committee called on Parliamentarians to ensure that SADC Member States strengthened inter-country coordination by adopting good practices outlined in the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Framework.

“This framework strengthens disaster risk reduction capacities within SADC states by promoting coordination, information sharing, capacity building, and the implementation of disaster risk reduction measures at regional, national and community levels,” the Committee said.

SADC states were urged to adopt a bottom-up approach to disaster management with particular focus on young women, girls, traditional and religious leaders.

Parliamentarians were also to step up advocacy for Member States to allocate adequate financial resources to strengthen disaster response while ensuring provision of adequate SRH



The Chairperson of the SADC PF Standing Committee on Human and Social Development and Special Programmes (HSDSP) Honorable Rosie Bistoquet of Seychelles.

commodities.

This included financial support for the provision of the Minimum Initial Service Packages for SRHiE and the establishment of one-stop centres for provision of SRH kits during emergencies, the committee recommended.

Another recommendation was for SADC Member States to, in conjunction with the higher and tertiary education sector and relevant partner organisations, develop disaggregated data collection tools to conduct community-based vulnerability assessments.

The findings from these assessments would allow relevant and targeted interventions, including



Hon. Kassim Hassan Haji of Tanzania

the provision of SRH commodities during emergencies.

The attention of SADC Member States was drawn to the reality of the growing interlinkages between SRH, climate change and disaster risk reduction which continued to disproportionately affected women and girls.

The Standing Committee met on 9 May 2023 under the theme: “Strengthening Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in the Context of Climate Change and Emergency Situations” and noted that the intersections between SRH, climate change and disaster management required urgent attention.

The Committee said while women and girls bore the brunt of extreme weather events, laws, policies and frameworks provided limited protection and did little to promote the enjoyment of their fundamental human rights, including SRH.



Hon. Paulina Mpariwa from Zimbabwe.

Hon. Bistoquet said SADC Member States must take urgent steps to mainstream SRHiE in disaster risk reduction frameworks, laws and policies.

During discussions, the Committee took note that SADC states had become prone to emergencies such as droughts, floods, conflicts and pandemics.

The emergencies had exacerbated pre-existing SRHR challenges, including high maternal mortality, teenage pregnancy, gender-based violence, and limited access to sexual and reproductive health services.

The Committee received a presentation which focused on the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) Readiness Assessment conducted by UNFPA and its partners.

The presentation noted that climate change, erratic and sometimes catastrophic weather events had become common in the SADC region and while SADC countries had disaster response plans, these plans, policies and legislative frameworks often did not incorporate plans on SRHR.

The presentation underscored MISP as an initiative to ensure that countries in East and Southern Africa had a minimum initial service package for SRH in emergencies.

The Committee learnt that the MISP was thus a response to the perceived weaknesses of the disaster management and disaster risk reduction institutional and legislative frameworks.

It noted that the strength of most countries lay within the laws and policies on disaster management and risk reduction, national health preparedness and response plans and mechanisms, coordination mechanisms and



Hon. Julien Nyemba of Zambia

warehousing facilities.

Debating the Report of the Standing Committee on HSDSP, Hon. Paurina Mpariwa, Member of Parliament from Zimbabwe said no discussion on social protection programme could be effective without involving women because a family consisted of a woman, the youth and the man.

“However, human needs are identified in two categories: that which suits women and that which suits men. Therefore, social protection programmes should be deliberately designed to suit the targeted category. Whenever we design programmes, we should reach out in terms of the needs of that particular group,” Hon Mpariwa said.

Hon. Julien Nyemba of Zambia said the Zambian President, His Excellency Hakainde Hichilema, was a champion on ending child marriages.

“He has taken this matter seriously and outlined a practical demonstration to ending child marriages, by improving young people’s welfare in the country,” Hon Nyemba said.

The MP said Zambia had introduced free education to enable those who had dropped out of school to return, including those forced into marriages.

Hon. Nyemba said increased constituency development funds had helped to empower young people, especially girls, and the implementation of life-skills and health education, demonstrated government commitment to empowering youths with factual information to avoid unwanted teenage pregnancies.

She said disaster-affected areas receive relief packages which included contraceptives, to help

delay pregnancies during disasters such as floods, which in turn increased women’s vulnerabilities.

The MP said parliament had implemented the SADC-PF SRHR, HIV and AIDS and government projects since 2014; focusing on ending child marriages, teenage pregnancies, GBV, HIV and AIDS. Several laws had been passed to promote SRHR including Children’s Code Act 2022 that criminalised child marriage and provided a definition of a child in Zambia.

“We also have an active Zambian Women Parliamentary Caucus and a strong partnership on SRHR, with civil society and international organisations such as UN Agencies,” she said.

Hon. Dr Pinkie Manamolela of Lesotho said there was need to prioritise human and social development to promote women’s sexual and reproductive health rights, especially with



Hon. Dr Pinkie Manamolela of Lesotho

emergencies brought about by climate change.

“Evidence shows that women and girls are at increased risk of sexual violence and unintended pregnancies. Child birth is fraught with danger. The rate of maternal deaths and injury in crisis zones almost doubles the world average but preventing unintended pregnancies remains challenging for too many women and girls,” said Hon Manamolela.

She said the domestication of the SADC Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriages and Protecting Children Already in Marriage as well as the Model Law on GBV were critical in addressing the SRHR related issues.

The MP said Lesotho had amended the Child Protection and Welfare Act 2011 to domesticate the SADC Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage.

“Parliamentarians are fundamental to the promotion and full implementation of SRHR and they must act as spokespersons for gender equality and SRHR for all,” Hon Manamolela said.

A South African MP said it is important to recognize complex and other aspects that exist between gender equality, SRHR and climate change.

He called for the protection of marginalized communities including women, refugees and indigenous people who are mostly affected by climate change and called for a world where any individual can exercise their SRHR even in the face of climate change.

Hon. Agnes Kafula from Namibia said the SADC region had adopted the Responsive Risk Reduction Strategy of 2020-2030 which underscored the need to promote gender responsiveness and ensure women were not left behind the disaster management policy.

She said Namibia had a lot of policies on climate change that provided legal framework in 2010. This was a national strategy for climate change mitigation and adaptation activities. The policy promoted facilitation, identification of sectors and cross-cutting climate change strategies to lower Namibia’s overall risk and the risk to most vulnerable groups and sectors.

She said constituency health workers catered for villages, bringing health services to the vulnerable communities who stayed far from health facilities.

“We also have a programme for distributing free sanitary pads to schoolgirls,” she said.



Hon. Agnes Kafula from Namibia

RWPC calls for women's inclusion in digital space

SADC Parliaments have been challenged to lobby governments to grant tax rebates or subsidies for the importation of digital gadgets to ease access of these devices by women and youth.

The call was made by the Chairperson of the SADC-PF's Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC) Hon. Regina Esparon, Member of Parliament from Seychelles when she tabled the Committee's Report on 4 July for adoption by the 53rd Plenary Assembly held in Arusha, Tanzania from 01-08 July, 2023.

Hon. Nkhensani Kate Bilankulu, Member of Parliament from South Africa seconded the Report and said the media play a very important role in disseminating information in society.

The RWPC also urged SADC Member Parliaments to streamline programmes to allow for ICT inclusiveness and an enhanced engagement by women MPs, especially on fast-evolving issues such as social media.

The RWPC also wanted the Plenary Assembly to close the digital gender divide by enabling programmes to sensitise, especially women MPs, to be ICT literate and to promote participatory democracy by engaging citizens through online platforms.

The Caucus also encouraged SADC Parliaments to diligently perform their oversight role to ensure governments provide reliable electrical power and internet connectivity infrastructure, especially to rural areas to bring social media platforms to the people.

It urged SADC parliamentarians to encourage their governments to lobby mobile telecommunication service providers to ensure affordable airtime and data tariffs for the generality of the citizens and to enact necessary cybersecurity legislation to



Chairperson of the SADC-PF Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus Hon. Regina Esparon of Seychelles

protect users from online fraud and online gender-based violence, especially for women and girls who may be less technologically savvy due to the digital gender divide.

The Caucus also encouraged SADC-PF to propose for the strengthening of response mechanisms to gender-based violence, including cyber violence, in Member States holding elections in 2023, 2024 and beyond, through the Forum's election observation missions.

SADC Member States were pressed to promote ICT literacy and education at all levels to both men and women to provide equal opportunities in life while leveraging on ICT resources; and directed the SADC PF Secretariat to organise more training on managing social media content.

The RWPC pledged to continue supporting SADC parliaments to close the digital gender divide in Southern Africa.

The RWPC met on 11 May 2023, under the theme, "Leveraging the Social Media to Advance Women Political Participation in the SADC Region."

The Caucus noted that in the past, politicians campaigned through newspapers, radios, direct mail and television. However, limited or biased media reporting could affect the career prospects of women in politics, if it was left unchecked.

The Caucus believed that social media could help level the political playing field, where money and access to formal communication channels posed huge barriers to new entrants, especially women.

The RWPC members received training from two resource persons representing Southern African Youth Forum. They were exposed to different types of social media tools including Twitter;

Facebook; LinkedIn; Instagram; WhatsApp; YouTube; Snap Chat; Weibo; and TikTok.

The members were sensitised on the importance of a social media strategy to engage their followers and reach a broader audience, among others.

The Plenary Assembly also engaged in debate on the RWPC Report.

Hon. Princess Kasune of Zambia said it was gratifying that Africa had had three female Presidents - former President of Malawi, H.E. Joyce Banda, the former President of Liberia, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and H.E. Samia Suluhu Hassan of Tanzania.

Hon. Kasune said it was important to acknowledge that unless instruments, especially the quota system, were implemented in Parliament, SADC would forever lag behind. She said Zambia had fallen from 19% women MPs to only 15% "yet our colleagues in Tanzania are at 37%".

She said this underscored the need to learn from each other and put in measures, policies and systems that would help states to reach the 50-50 parity targets of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

Hon. Talitha Monnakgotla of Botswana said women made up 11% of MPs in Botswana where there was a low percentage of women participating in politics especially at higher levels of decision making.

She said the majority of women in politics were not in a position to use the mainstream media campaign because it was expensive, adding that in modern times politician uses social media - Facebook, Twitter or other accounts but women's visibility was very low, maybe due to fear of cyber



Hon. Talitha Monnakgotla of Botswana



Hon. Mope Khati of Lesotho



bullying.

The MP said the challenge for rural areas was poor network, lack of electricity in some areas, lack of radio signals or shops to buy airtime, while most women had low ICT literacy.

Hon. Roseby Gadama of Malawi said social media was a very powerful tool for advancing women's participation in politics in the SADC Region.

She said some service providers had different charges for different countries and with hunger gripping many countries, women had to make the difficult choice either to buy expensive internet bundles or food for the family.

Hon. Dr. Tulia Ackson of Tanzania said women struggled to fight cyber-bullying or run businesses on social media.

She said measures must be put in place to protect women in that space because some may be strong in dealing with certain insults but not be very strong on other type of offences and violations.

She said in attacks against women on social media, the abusers went after her family, her personality or how she looks.

Hon. Mope Khati of Lesotho said parliamentarians tend to see gender issues as a war of a single gender, which was not the case and added that gender issues concerned all people. He said parliamentarians must make sure men felt obliged to support women empowerment.

He said gender issues were not necessarily a game of numbers, but about understanding that human beings have some fundamental differences, but such differences should not disadvantage or victimize any of the genders.

He said there were powerful women with more income than their men, but they could still be subjected to domestic violence. He added that having money, or an influential position, was not necessarily the answer to gender inequality and gender violence.

"It is about us understanding that we have to be a collective in fighting the issues around gender and not making a war against one single gender," he said.

Hon. Vipuakuje Muharukua of Namibia said he believed in modernizing systems, but he was also an ardent believer in the social safety net for Africans.

He said as MPs debated the concept of gender equality, it was prudent to understand some background. The MP gave the example of the Himba people of Namibia.

He said the Himba people had their own way of women empowerment and leadership in a typical household where a man had seven wives. He told the session that each woman would get leadership role, each household would have its own cattle, with a woman presiding over the household with fields and her children.

Hon. Esparon said the issue of digital and social media remained a challenge for women in Africa, especially it could empower them to better communicate through the world, and yet it was an important tool to advance women's participation in the political field in the SADC Region.

She said while the use of various digital platforms was effective media for communication, digitalization also brought along other threats. It was imperative for countries to put in place legislation to address the situation so as to protect women and girls from cyber bullying and cyber violence.

SADC parliamentarians happy with Treasurer's report

THE total revenue from mandatory contributions of SADC members for the financial year 01 April, 2022 to 31 March, 2023 is N\$21,148,050, (Namibia dollars).

This was said by the SADC PF Treasurer, Honourable Mduduzi Masebula of Eswatini, when he presented for adoption, the Management Accounts of the SADC Parliamentary Forum for the financial year ended 31st March, 2023 to the 53rd Plenary Assembly held in Arusha, Tanzania from 01 to 08 July, 2023.

Hon T. Sekhamane of Lesotho seconded the motion saying while holding meetings physically was more expensive, virtual meetings were highly cost-effective and a huge time saver in terms of planning for the meeting and other logistics, including transport.

However, virtual meetings did not elicit much enthusiasm among Members and did not inspire much engagement and debate experience, especially for large meetings such as the Plenary Assembly.

Hon Masebula explained that the management accounts consist of the Status of Mandatory Member Contributions as at 31st March, 2023, with an update as at 15th June, 2023; the Budget Performance Report as at 31st March, 2023; and the Financial Reports for Donor-funded Programmes or projects.



SADC PF Treasurer, Honourable Mduduzi Masebula of Eswatini.

The Treasurer said the current annual mandatory contributions from member Parliaments stood at N\$1,501,500 per annum per parliament. Seychelles' contribution is N\$127,050 per annum. The total revenue from mandatory contributions for the financial year 1st April, 2022 to 31st March, 2023, was, therefore N\$21,148,050.

"As at 31 March, 2023, eleven parliaments had paid contributions in full and had no outstanding balances. These were Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique,

Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe," Hon Masebula said.

Namibia and Zambia had made advance payments for the financial year beginning 01 April, 2023 and four countries, namely Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Madagascar, Malawi and Tanzania, had outstanding balances for the year ended 31 March 2023, he added.

The balance brought forward as at 01 April, 2023, included advance payments by Zambia and Namibia for the financial year beginning 01 April, 2023. As at 30 June, 2023, three countries, DRC, Malawi and Madagascar, still had outstanding balances for the financial year ended 31 March, 2023. However, Malawi only had an outstanding balance of N\$358,000 for the year ended 31 March, 2023, having made a payment of N\$1,143,500 in May, 2023. The balance for Malawi was then N\$1,859,499.90, which included the amount invoiced for the current financial year.

"As at 30 June, 2023, seven parliaments had paid their contributions for the current financial year in full. These were Botswana, Eswatini, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Mauritius had since paid, becoming the eighth country to have paid. Seven parliaments were yet to pay for the current financial year," he said.

The Plenary Assembly was requested to consider and take note of the status of annual Mandatory



Contributions as at 31st March, 2023, and the update as at 30th June, 2023. The Plenary Assembly was requested to appreciate the commitment of Member Parliaments in ensuring contributions were paid and to encourage Parliaments with outstanding balances to settle them as a priority.

Presenting the Budget Performance Report as at 31st March, 2023, Hon Matsebula updated MPs on the impact and application of the policy to optimise technology for the implementation of activities.

“Plenary will recall that the budget for the financial year ended 31 March, 2023 assumed that one Plenary Assembly, Standing Committee meeting and other meetings would be held virtually, unless other sources of funding were found.

“This was in view of the deliberate policy to manage scarce financial resources by optimising the use of technology to facilitate virtual meetings, in view of the successful virtual holding of the 47th and 48th Plenary Assemblies, and other meetings, during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020,” the Treasurer said.

The Plenary Assembly was advised that while the Forum was able to facilitate virtual meetings in the past, the members had expressed a strong preference for face-to-face meetings to the Executive Committee.

In addition, the restrictions occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic no longer applied and many member Parliaments had reduced their investments in Information Technology compared to during the pandemic.

The Plenary Assembly was advised that the 51st and 52nd Plenary Assemblies were held physically in Lilongwe, Malawi, and Kinshasa, DRC, respectively, which prompted the allocation of funds from Retained Earnings to cater for the change.

The Standing Committee meetings for the 51st and 52nd Plenary Assembly Sessions were also held physically in Johannesburg, South Africa, resulting in higher expenditure than budgeted.

“Plenary may also note that, fortunately, the Standing Committee meetings were largely funded by the SRHR Project with GIZ and other donors also contributing, due to the limited SADC-PF main budget,” he explained.

Hon Matsebula said the Budget Variance Report as at 31st March, 2023, did not include expenditure from donor-funded budgeted income, but focused on budgeted income and expenditure from Mandatory Member Contributions and other income, including interest earned by SADC-PF and administrative fees from the SIDA Project.

In the approved budget for the financial year, total expenditure amounted to N\$50,141,678. Of this amount, N\$25,881,788 was budgeted for donor-



Hon T. Sekhamane of Lesotho.

funded activities, which had a corresponding total budgeted income of N\$25,881,788 and had, therefore, a zero net effect on the SADC-PF budget.

The budgeted expenditure for SADC-PF income (minus donor funds) was N\$24,259,890.

Under the Budget Variance Report was budget expenditure of N\$24,259,890.

Hon Matsebula said under the Supplementary Budget, budgeted expenditure increased by N\$4,325,104 from N\$24,259,890, to N\$28,584,994.

A total of N\$473,000 was brought forward towards capital expenditure not incurred in the previous year. A balance of N\$228,000 was brought forward for election observation from the same budget line.

An unfavourable variance of N\$291,994 (217%) was realised with expenditure of N\$426,394 against the budget provision of N\$134,400. Expenditure on this budget line was payment for consultants for the Salary Review, Performance Management Systems, and review of the Finance and Internal Audit manuals.

For travel, subsistence and transport, the unfavourable variance was 173% of expenditure. The actual expenditure was N\$670,107, against budgeted expenditure of N\$245,584, resulting in a negative variance of N\$424,523, which was 173%.

For programme support, the budget was N\$301,500, while expenditure incurred was N\$336,831, resulting in an unfavourable variance of N\$35,331, which is 12% of expenditure.

For the Angola Election Observation Mission in August, 2022, the expenditure was N\$1,312,612, against a budget of N\$1,032,000, resulting in a negative variance of N\$280,612, which is 27%.

Contributions towards the same were committed from six Member Parliaments, with three already received from Mozambique, Zambia and South Africa; the contributions of US\$4,800 per participating Parliament were included in the budgeted expenditure amount of N\$1,032,000. In addition, N\$228,000 was brought forward for election observation from the previous financial year ended 31st March, 2022.

For audit, the actual expenditure was N\$176,132 against a budget of N\$150,000. The negative variance of N\$26,132, which was 17%, was caused by the actual fee being higher than budgeted.

“The third part of the Management Accounts was the Financial Reports for Donor Funded Projects and I will start with the SIDA Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights Project (SRHR). Following the no-cost extension approval in 2023, the SRHR Project was now to run from 1st July, 2019 to 31st May, 2023,” said the Treasurer.

The total grant budget was US\$3,778,795, which is 35 million Swedish Kroners, to be used over four years. The SRHR funds were kept in separate bank accounts and the financial statements were prepared in US dollars and audited separately.

The total grant received and funds utilised during the financial years 2022/2023 in US\$ were:

Balance Brought forward 1,277,783;

Grant Received 467,936;

Fund Utilised 450,923;

Net Restricted Fund 294,796.

SIDA approved a no-cost extension of the project for two months from April, 2023 to 31st May, 2023. During this period, the SRHR funds available (US\$294,796) were utilised to finance salaries and other expenses.

According to the statement of financial position as at 31st March, 2023, the balance of funds brought forward on 1st April, 2022, from the financial year ended 31st March, 2022, was US\$44,435 (N\$645,800.78). Expenditure incurred from 1st April, 2022 to 31st March, 2023 totalled US\$29,560.75, resulting in a balance of US\$14,873.94. The expenditure was incurred on the Standing Committees on FANR and TIFI.

The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) Grant on Strengthening Parliamentary Capacity in the SADC administered by GIZ was 309,905.09 euros.

APHRC held ten virtual capacity building meetings/trainings from April, 2022 to March, 2023 on various areas of interest, for both Members of Parliament and staff of member Parliaments and the Secretariat. Each meeting was estimated to have cost at least US\$5 500. The total contribution from APHRC was valued at US\$55 000.

The 53rd Plenary Assembly adopted the Treasurer's Report.



Committee wants marginalized groups included in elections

The 53rd SADC-PF Plenary Assembly has been urged to encourage member states to implement regular reforms of the electoral systems, guided by the seven main pillars of electoral reforms, particularly the inclusion of marginalized groups and electoral integrity.

This recommendation was made by the chairperson of the Regional Parliamentary Model Laws Oversight Committee (RPMLOC), Hon Ishmael Ndaila Onani, Member of Parliament from Malawi on 6 July, 2023 when he tabled the Committee's Report for adoption.

Hon Shally Josepha Raymond of Tanzania seconded the motion saying most SADC countries inherited electoral systems from the colonial era, and these were not suitable as they contributed to the social, economic and political challenges that the region faces.

She said these inherited electoral systems were fraught with flaws and must be reformed to address shortcomings that included the exclusion of marginalised groups.

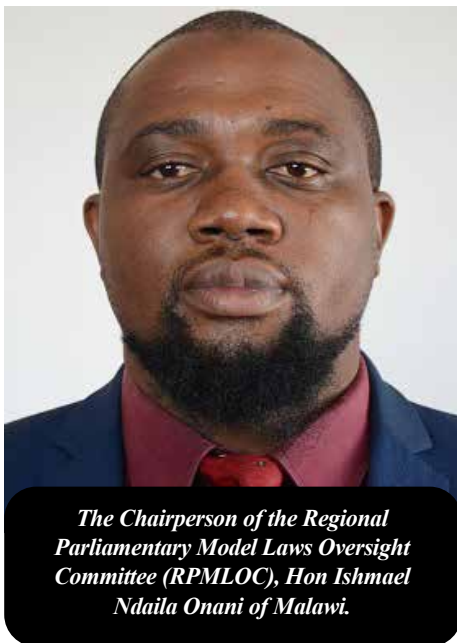
Hon Onani implored SADC Parliaments to advocate the development and enactment of legislation to ensure reforms to the electoral system were premised on broad-based representation of all segments of society, including vulnerable and marginalized groups, through stakeholder consultations, genuine national dialogue and consensus.

The Committee urged SADC members to find ways of motivating the youth to participate in elections to stem youth voter apathy and declining trust in institutions, including political parties.

Ahead of the Plenary Assembly, the Committee held one meeting on the theme: "Progress on the Domestication of the SADC Model Law on Elections: Using Electoral System Designing to Achieve Inclusive Governance, specifically Women, Youth and Minority Groups participation and representation as well as Political Financing Regulation".

The SADC Model Law on Elections, passed in 2008 in Maputo, provides for two important features of the electoral process - electoral system design and political financing. If adequately domesticated and implemented, these features would give citizens confidence in representative democracy.

Against this background, the Forum realised that both features needed to be tackled simultaneously to heighten confidence in Parliaments based on the electoral process and in representative democracy.



The Chairperson of the Regional Parliamentary Model Laws Oversight Committee (RPMLOC), Hon Ishmael Ndaila Onani of Malawi.

The Model Law on Elections sought to regulate the electoral process based on best international practices to ensure elections were free, fair, regular and accessible to all citizens of voting age.

Over the years, the Forum had consistently underscored the necessity for SADC states to regulate limitations for political financing to ensure that corruptive practices and vote buying did not distort the electoral process.

The RPMLOC noted that inclusiveness in elections meant meaningful inclusion and representation of all citizens in society. It also noted that Zimbabwe (August); Eswatini (September); Madagascar (Parliamentary December) and DRC (December) were to hold elections in 2023.

Another seven countries - Botswana, Comoros, Madagascar (Presidential), Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa - were due to hold elections in 2024.

The Committee highlighted the hallmarks of representative democracy and the principles of free and fair elections as freedom, representation, accountability, inclusiveness and constitutional order.

This lent credence to the meeting's focus on inclusiveness of vulnerable and marginalized groups. The Committee also conceded that reforms should not wait until a crisis happened but should be undertaken periodically and should be held under nationally and internationally recognized election standards, in particular those contained in the Model Law on Elections.

The Committee noted that strategies that could be

used to stem the declining voter turnout, ranged from affirmative action to providing voluntary and legislated gender quotas to providing funding for these groups.

In particular, the Committee agreed that the Model Law provided that constitutions of member countries should have provisions for electoral systems that ensured broad participation of citizens, especially marginalized groups, and promote and protect fundamental human rights as well as the secrecy of the ballot.

In debating the motion, Hon. Ditlapelo Keorapetse of Botswana said there was a decline in voter turnout, especially among the youth aged 18 to 29 and various scholars had conducted studies on this. He said the most disheartening fact was that while women participated in large numbers in voting, they remain underrepresented in key decision-making bodies, like Parliament.

"In Botswana for instance, we have 5-7% women representation in Parliament," Hon. Keorapetse said.

He also said other marginalised groups besides the youth and women were also underrepresented in various Assemblies in the SADC Region and the SADC Model Law on Elections was a very important tool which must be domesticated to help them.

Hon. Keorapetse spoke of countries still lagging behind in State funding of political parties saying business communities in those countries would be inclined to support the ruling party and not the opposition.

He called for states to adhere to the Model Law provision that ballot papers be counted at polling stations and not moved hundreds of kilometres to counting stations.

Hon. Senator Isaac Mmemo Magagula of Eswatini said Parliament and the government of Eswatini had found it fit to amend the electoral law to ensure that women, the youth and the marginalised were catered for during the nomination and other processes that were part of electoral laws.

"Rome was not built in a day. We are steadily and surely getting there with this new development in line with the overwhelming spirit of this meeting," he said.

Hon. Talitha Monnakgotla of Botswana said political finance and regulations were very important, especially in relation to combating illicit financial flows and SADC must use such laws to fight money laundering which could be

used to finance political parties.

She said the electoral laws could also guard against state capture which had the potential to compromise the economy.

She said women, youth and minority groups struggled financially to register as candidates in elections because of lack of financial backing and electoral legislation must have provisions to fund women, youth and minority groups to level the political landscape.

This would encourage these groups to contest for political office, she said, adding that because Botswana was progressive in issues of gender equality and women empowerment, Parliament had endorsed four women specially elected Members of Parliament.

“This is commendable because Parliament has seven women and six of them are in the executive, and I am one of them. This shows that Botswana is headed in the right direction,” she said.

Hon. Kalalwe Mukosa, Member of Parliament from Zambia noted that the Model Law on Elections emphasized equal suffrage and broad participation, saying the state should ensure equal suffrage and broad participation of citizens, including minority groups and that the broadest



Hon Shally Josepha Raymond of Tanzania

pool of voters should be allowed to cast ballots.

He said, for the first time since independence in 1964, Zambia had inmates voting in 2021 and was also on course in domesticating this Model Law.

Hon. Dr. Tulia Ackson of Tanzania said the Model Law on Elections had positive measures such as diversity management, affirmative action including quotas for women, youth, persons with disabilities, the elderly minority, ethnic and other disadvantaged groups.

However, the model laws have not really been adopted in countries.

She said SADC cannot move forward together on domesticating the model law when they have left so many people behind and must go back and bring them on board before moving forward together.

“I think this underscores that we have to be inclusive,” she said.

She then wondered for how long SADC can justifiably blame the colonial masters for its problems, saying SADC had reached a point where citizens must be responsible for their inaction, and do something about it.

“We are MPs sitting here, Speakers sitting here, these MPs here are equally parliamentarians in their respective Houses. Bring those issues in our respective countries. Let us make the changes. We cannot blame the colonial masters sixty years after independence. We have grown past that,” she said.

Observer speaks out on 53rd Plenary Assembly

The Plenary (TP) sat down with **Mr Joab Okanda (JO)**, the Pan African Senior Advocacy Advisor to Christian Aid, one of the observers during the 53rd Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC PF and sought his views on the Plenary Assembly and other related issues.

TP: Mr Joab Okanda, thank you for making time for this interview. The curtain has fallen on the 53rd Plenary Assembly Session. You attended it from start to finish as an observer. What are your take home thoughts?

JO: It has been great to be part of the 53rd Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC PF organised under the theme “Modernising Agriculture to Address Food Security and Youth Unemployment in the SADC Region: The Role of Parliaments.”

As you know, currently, the majority of Africans are food insecure. Prices of food have risen. Prices of fertiliser have risen and, therefore, it has been a timely conversation to organise a SADC PF Plenary Assembly under this theme. As we talk about modernising agriculture, we should be able to talk about how we are going to feed our people and who is actually feeding our people. The smallholder farmers are putting food on our tables. We need to continue looking at how they



Mr Joab Okanda

can be supported to be able to continue feeding the people of Africa. As we know, a hungry man is an angry man. Therefore, we can't progress without being able to feed ourselves.

On the Plenary itself, the number of reports that

have been discussed, the number of motions that have been adopted have been impressive. It's been amazing to see the kind of thought process; the kind of debates that have taken place here. It is very encouraging for an organisation such as ours and as Christian Aid, we need to continue engaging with the SADC PF.

We are very grateful to have been invited as observers. The issues of climate and gender are at the heart of Christian Aid. I like it that the Forum actually went further to discuss a motion around how to include issues of SRHR in climate mitigation and adaptation strategies and in climate-induced disasters and emergencies.

This means that the MPs that met here are connected with the communities that are being affected by increasing climate disasters and the challenges that our women and girls are going through whenever climate-induced disasters hit.

TP: What did you see as some of the areas of possible collaboration that exist between your organisation and SADC PF, just from the discussions you've heard over the last few days?

JO: As Christian Aid, we have done a lot of



research on gender and climate and that is an area we would like to pursue with the Secretariat to see how we can provide capacity-building.

We have done a number of reports that have informed both regional and global processes on climate, the recent one being women on the frontline that clearly outlines how women are affected by climate change differently from men but also what women are actually doing to address climate change because women are actually playing a leading role in addressing the impacts of climate change.

We are working on a big report and I was just discussing with the seconder of that motion, the Honourable Member from Namibia.

We are working on a report on business and human rights and the motion that was tabled here around taking a rights-based approach to our natural resources; making sure that we hold multinational companies accountable to the needs of communities, the rights of the people of Africa and the rights of the people and communities within the SADC region.

That report, we are happy to share when it comes out and we believe that it is going to inform on how the motion was adopted on business and human rights within the SADC PF. I am looking forward to working with them on how to take forward that report especially in the countries where we are physically present that is Malawi, DRC and Zimbabwe.

We are happy that one of our partners in Zimbabwe actually made contributions to that report before it

was tabled here.

TP: Let's talk a bit about the organisation of the 53rd Plenary Assembly Session. What struck you as an observer?

JO: What struck me most was the quality of the debates. For me, it shows that Members came prepared. They read the reports and they were ready to debate the issues. In terms of organisation in the context of climate change, this has been a paperless forum. That is quite amazing, and it shows that the SADC Secretariat, led by the Secretary General, is willing to walk the talk when it comes to climate change and that is very encouraging.

Having a largely paperless Plenary Assembly is not easy. Seeing MPs scanning the phones so that they can get access to the reports, for me has been amazing.

TP: Virtual vs Face-to-face Plenary Assembly. What do you think should be the way?

JO: I think face-to-face enables quality discussions. Just compare this to how we organised the Plenary Assembly in Malawi. It was a hybrid session and we had some technical hitches here and there and that impacted on the quality of the debate.

Some MPs were barely audible. I think it's important to continue organising the meetings physically, but allowing others online to follow the discussions as it was done in this meeting. People were able to follow the discussions on YouTube.

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As you know, currently, the majority of Africans are food insecure. Prices of food have risen. Prices of fertiliser have risen and, therefore, it has been a timely conversation to organise a SADC PF Plenary Assembly under this theme. As we talk about modernising agriculture, we should be able to talk about how we are going to feed our people and who is actually feeding our people.

- Mr Joab Okanda



Delegates participate during the 53rd Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC Parliamentary Forum.